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WILLIAM WINTER

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WANDERERS:

BEING A COLLECTION OF THE POEMS

OF

WILLIAM WINTER

AUTHOR OF "SHAKESPEARE'S ENGLAND," ETC.

NEW YORK
MACMILLAN & CO.
1892

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1888
By WILLIAM WINTER

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TO

THE DEAR AND SACRED MEMORY

OF MY BELOVED SON

ARTHUR

I DEDICATE THESE POEMS.

"My heart, sweet boy, shall be thy sepulchre."

"That 's for thoughts."

PREFACE

This collection does not include all the poems that its author has written; but it comprises all that he now would wish to preserve. The poetic impulse has been felt by him as a passion, but has seldom been used by him with conscious purpose. Most of his poems have drifted into life of their own accord, and therefore, and because their frail existence must be so dubious, he has ever viewed them as Wanderers, and so describes them here to be. They are the children of his

love, and perhaps his fondness for them may have blinded his judgment respecting their value, and persuaded him to seek for them such public attention and favour as they do not deserve. The only poetical literature absolutely essential to society is that which gives adequate expression to universal human nature, and is not restricted to the utterance of an individual heart. But it has seemed to the author of these poems,—which, of course, are offered as absolutely impersonal,—that they are the expression of various representative moods of human feeling and various representative aspects of human experience, and that therefore they may possibly possess the inherent right to exist. If not, a little time will give them to oblivion. Meanwhile, the desire to add something of vital worth to pure literature is not a selfish one; and the author

is wishful to believe that his poems are not altogether an unworthy addition to that old school of English Lyrical Poetry of which gentleness is the soul and simplicity the garment.

W. W.

London, 17*th Sept.* 1888.

POEMS OF WILLIAM WINTER.

MY QUEEN.

HE loves not well whose love is bold !
I would not have thee come too nigh :
The sun's gold would not seem pure gold
Unless the sun were in the sky :
To take him thence and chain him near
Would make his beauty disappear.

He keeps his state,—do thou keep thine,
And shine upon me from afar !
So shall I bask in light divine,
That falls from love's own guiding star ;
So shall thy eminence be high,
And so my passion shall not die.

But all my life will reach its hands
Of lofty longing toward thy face,
And be as one who speechless stands
In rapture at some perfect grace !
My love, my hope, my all will be
To look to heaven and look to thee !

Thy eyes will be the heavenly lights ;
  Thy voice the gentle summer breeze,
What time it sways, on moonlit nights,
  The murmuring tops of leafy trees ;
And I will touch thy beauteous form
In June's red roses, rich and warm.

But thou thyself shall come not down
  From that pure region far above ;
But keep thy throne and wear thy crown,
  Queen of my heart and queen of love !
A monarch in thy realm complete,
And I a monarch—at thy feet !

HOMAGE.

WHITE daisies on the meadow green
  Present thy beauteous form to me :
Peaceful and joyful these are seen,
  And peace and joy encompass thee.
I watch them, where they dance and shine,
And love them—for their charm is thine.

Red roses o'er the woodland brook
  Remember me thy lovely face :
So blushing and so fresh its look,
  So wild and shy its radiant grace !
I kiss them, in their coy retreat,
And think of lips more soft and sweet.

Gold arrows of the merry morn,
  Shot swiftly over orient seas ;
Gold tassels of the bending corn
  That ripple in the August breeze,
Thy wildering smile, thy glorious hair,
And all thy power and state declare.

White, red, and gold—the awful crown
  Of beauty and of virtue too !
From what a height those eyes look down
  On him who proudly dares to sue !
Yet, free from self as God from sin
Is love that loves, nor asks to win.

Let me but love thee in the flower,
  The waving grass, the dancing wave,
The fragrant pomp of garden bower,
  The violet on the nameless grave,
Sweet dreams by night, sweet thoughts by day,—
And time shall tire ere love decay !

Let me but love thee in the glow
  When morning on the ocean shines,
Or in the mighty winds that blow,
  Snow-laden, through the mountain pines—
In all things fair, or grand, or dread,
And all shall die ere love be dead !

VICTORIA.

MIDNIGHT and moonlight encircle her slumbers,
Pillowed, afar, on the wandering deep:
Softly, ah softly, with tenderest numbers,
Echoes of Paradise, lull her to sleep!

Stars in your lustre, and clouds in your fleetness,
Mix round the gallant ship, breasting the gale!
Shed your sweet influence over her sweetness!
Guard every bulwark and bless every sail!

Billows, roll gently, that bear on your bosom
Treasure more precious than infinite gold—
Beauty in spring-time and love in its blossom,
All that my hungry heart longs to enfold.

Ocean, that breaks on the rocks where I languish,
Blessing and prayer on your surges to pour,
Like, in your might, to my passionate anguish,
Shield her, and save her, and waft her to shore!

Angels, that float in the heavenly spaces,
Ah, while you guide her through perils unknown,
Still let the light of your beautiful faces
Shine on her face that is fair as your own!

Violets, welcome her! roses, adore her—
Blushing with rapture from mountain to sea!
Lilies, flash out on the meadows before her,
Sparkle in glory, and ripple in glee!

Proudly she comes, like the pageant of morning
Borne through the pearl-purpled gates of the day!
Darkness and sorrow, consumed in her scorning,
Shrink from her splendour and vanish away.

Scattered o'er mountain and forest and river,
Far the dark phantoms of trouble are hurled:
She will illuminate, she will deliver,
She will redeem and transfigure the world!

THE LOVER'S CHOICE.

THE stroller in the pensive field
Doth many a wildering flower descry:
Sometimes to him the roses yield;
Sometimes the lilies feed his eye;
Sometimes he takes delight in one,
Sometimes in all, sometimes in none.

But when, in dusky woodland ways,
He sees, beside some dreaming stone,
The fresh, untutored violet raise
Her pleading eyes for him alone,
Then makes his heart its final choice,
And nature speaks, in passion's voice.

The stroller beauty's garden through,
By many a wayward impulse led,—
Sometimes is charmed by gold and blue,
Sometimes by brown and mantling red;
Sometimes proud dame and maiden small
Please just the same, or not at all.

But when, remote from pleasure's whirl,
He sees, at home's sequestered shrine,
The ardent, cheerful, guileless girl,
Of mortal mould but soul divine,—

Too good, too beautiful, to know
How fair her worth and beauty show ;

Then all his roving fancies pause,
  Entranced by this o'erwhelming grace ;
It rules him by celestial laws,
  It lights a splendour in his face :
'T is the best good that Fate can give—
And all for which 'tis life to live !

QUESTIONS.

BECAUSE love's sigh is just a sigh,
  Doth it the less love's heart disclose ?
Because the rose must fade and die,
  Is it the less the lovely rose ?
Because black night must shroud the day,
Shall the brave sun no more be gay ?

Because chill autumn frights the birds,
  Shall we distrust that spring will come ?
Because sweet words are only words,
  Shall love for evermore be dumb ?
Because our bliss is fleeting bliss,
Shall we who love forbear to kiss ?

Because those eyes of gentle mirth
  Must sometime cease my heart to thrill,
Because the sweetest voice on earth
  Sooner or later must be still,
Because its idol is unsure,
Shall my strong love the less endure?

Ah, no! let lovers breathe their sighs,
  And roses bloom, and music sound,
And passion burn on lips and eyes,
  And pleasure's merry world go round:
Let golden sunshine flood the sky,
And let me love or let me die!

AN ANGEL BRIDE.

HER young face is softly fair—
  Pearl of morning flushed with red—
And the brown and silken hair
  Hovers mist-like round her head.

And her voice is soft and low,
  Clear as music and as sweet;
Hearing it, you hardly know
  Where the sound and silence meet.

All the magic who can tell
Of her laughter and her sighs?
Or what heavenly meanings dwell
In her kind, confiding eyes?

Pretty lips, as rubies bright,
Scarcely hide the tiny pearls;
Little wandering stars of light
Love to nestle in her curls.

All her ways are winning ways,
Full of tenderness and grace;
And a witching sweetness plays
Fondly o'er her gentle face.

True and pure her soul within,—
Breathing a celestial air!
Evil and the shame of sin
Could not dwell a moment there.

Is it but a vision, this?
Fond creation of the brain?
Phantom of a fancied bliss?
Type of beauty void and vain?

No! the tides of being roll
Toward a heaven that 's yet to be,
Where this idol of my soul
Waits and longs for love and me.

WISHES.

I.

THINK of me as your friend, I pray,
And call me by a tender name :
will not care what others say,
If only you remain the same !
I will not care how dark the night,
I will not care how wild the storm :
Your love will fill my heart with light,
And shield me close, and keep me warm.

II.

Think of me as your friend, I pray,
For else my life is little worth :
So shall your memory light my way,
Although we meet no more on earth :
For while I know your faith secure,
I ask no happier fate to see :
Thus to be loved by one so pure
Is honour rich enough for me.

A LOVE STORY.

I.

THEY walked beside the summer sea,
And watched the slowly dying sun:
And "O," she said, "come back to me,
My love, my own, my only one!"
But while he kissed her fears away,
The gentle waters kissed the shore,
And, sadly whispering, seemed to say,
He'll come no more! he'll come no more!

II.

Alone beside the autumn sea
She watched the sombre death of day;
And "O," she said, "remember me,
And love me, darling, far away!"
A cold wind swept the watery gloom,
And, darkly whispering on the shore,
Sighed out the secret of his doom,—
He'll come no more! he'll come no more!

III.

In peace beside the winter sea
A white grave glimmers to the moon;
And waves are fresh, and clouds are free,
And shrill winds pipe a careless tune.

One sleeps beneath the dark blue wave,
And one upon the lonely shore;
But, joined in love, beyond the grave,
They part no more! they part no more!

RELICS.

THE violets that you gave are dead—
They could not bear the loss of you:
The spirit of the rose has fled—
It loved you, and its love was true:
Back to your lips that spirit flies,
To bask beneath your radiant eyes.

Only the ashes bide with me,
The ashes of the ruined flowers—
Types of a rapture not to be;
Sad relics of bewildering hours;
Poor, frail, forlorn, and piteous shows
Of errant passion's wasted woes.

He grandly loves who loves in vain:
These withered flowers that lesson teach.
They suffered, they did not complain,
Their life was love too great for speech.
In silent pride their fate they bore;
They loved, they grieved, they died—no more!

Far off the purple banners flare,
  Beneath the golden morning spread:
I know what queen is worshipped there,
  What laurels wreathe her lovely head:
Her name be sacred, in my thought,
And sacred be the grief she brought!

For, since I saw that glorious face,
  And heard the music of that voice,
Much beauty 's fallen to disgrace
  That used to make my heart rejoice;
And rose and violet ne'er can be
The same that once they were to me.

CHANGED.

IT is not that she 's far away
  That breaks my heart and dims my day;
It is that there is something gone
Her passion used to dream upon,—
That now the tender dream is o'er,
And him she loved she loves no more.

Her absence makes my spirit mourn—
Yet e'en her absence could be borne:
But,—bleakest of all human grief,
And desolate beyond relief,—
One thought consumes my bosom's core—
That him she loved she loves no more.

The violets should be bluer far,
The roses redder than they are,
And lighter o'er the rippling grass
The shadows of the clouds should pass.
There 's nothing as it was before—
For him she loved she loves no more.

CIRCE.

IT is the law of streams to run,
Of autumn leaves to fall;
And she who has been false to one—
She will be false to all.

O, wild as tempest on the sea
Is that poor lover's fate,
Whose faithful spirit, bound to thee,
Must hope, and fear, and wait!

By surge of joy and storm of pain
His heart is soothed or broke;
He would not rend thy heavenly chain—
He cannot bear thy yoke.

There is no heaven so high as faith—
No hell so deep as doubt,
No haunted spectre like the wraith
Thy fancies wile or flout!

Ah, let that tiger heart of thine,
By brutish mercy led,
To just one piteous act incline—
And strike thy lover dead !

Then, let the streams for ever run,
The leaves for ever fall !
Thou wilt—at last—be true to one,
And not be false to all.

WITHERED ROSES.

NOT made by worth nor marred by flaw,
Not won by good nor lost by ill,
Love is its own and only law,
And lives and dies by its own will.
It was our fate and not our sin
That we should love and love should win.

Not bound by oath, nor stayed by prayer,
Nor held by thirst of strong desire,
Love lives like fragrance in the air,
And dies as breaking waves expire.
'T was death, not falsehood, bade us part—
The death of love, that killed my heart.

Not kind, as dreaming poets think,
  Nor merciful, as sages say—
Love heeds not where its victims sink,
  When once its passion ebbs away.
'T was nature—it was not disdain—
That made thee careless of my pain.

Not thralled by law, nor ruled by right,
  Love keeps no audit with the skies :
Its star, that once is quenched in night,
  Has set—and never more will rise.
My soul is lost, by thee forgot,
And there 's no heaven where thou art not.

But happy he, though scathed and lone,
  Who sees afar love's fading wings,—
Whose seared and blighted heart has known
  The splendid agony it brings !
No life that is, no life to be
Can ever take the Past from me !

Red roses, bloom for other lives—
  Your withered leaves alone are mine :
Yet, not for all that Time survives
  Would I your heavenly gift resign—
Now cold and dead, once warm and true,
The love that lived and died in you.

THE UNDERTONE.

IT droops and dies in morning light—
The rose that yesterday was whole :
"Ah, whither, on the wind of night,
Is borne the fragrance of my soul?"

It sinks upon the ocean zone—
The wind that marred the tender rose :
"Ah, whither has the fragrance flown,
And what shall give my soul repose?"

It breaks upon the rocky shore—
The vast, tumultuous, grieving sea :
"Ah, never, never, never more
Can love and peace come back to me!"

It sobs, far up the lonely sky,
It faints in regions of the blest—
The endless, bitter, human cry,
—And only God could tell the rest.

LOVE'S REFUGE.

I.

SET your face to the sea, fond lover,—
Cold in darkness the sea-winds blow!
Waves and clouds and the night will cover
All your passion and all your woe:
Sobbing waves and the death that is in them,
Sweet as the lips that once you prest—
Pray that your hopeless heart may win them!
Pray that your weary life may rest!

II.

Set your face to the stars, fond lover,—
Calm, and silent, and bright, and true!—
They will pity you, they will hover
Tenderly over the deep for you.
Winds of heaven will sigh your dirges,
Tears of heaven for you be spent,
And sweet, for you, will the murmuring surges
Pour the wail of their low lament.

WHITE ROSES.

MORE strange than death to all regrets,
Love gives no tear to passion sped:
Its frozen heart at once forgets
The wronged, the absent, and the dead.
We see the wave that Venus rides—
We do not see the doom it hides.

Fierce, boundless, fetterless, supreme,
Relentless, glorious, mindless, gay,
Love grants us one supernal dream,
One vision, one ecstatic day;
In Fate's dull book one fiery page—
Of bliss an hour, of woe an age.

Be the red roses never more
Companions to a thought of mine!
Behind me fades the lessening shore,
Above the stars of midnight shine;
On black and dangerous seas they gleam,
And life is done with doubt and dream.

Pale spectres of all dead desire,
  Ye wandering souls of heavenly light,
So lovely in your soft attire,
  So coldly pure, so sadly bright,
Henceforth be angels of my fate,
And take the life ye consecrate !

White roses for the cradled head,
  The bridal veil, the stainless pall !
When love and sin and grief are dead,
  Let the white roses shroud them all !
Ah ! bloom for me while time flows on,
And guard my rest when I am gone.

LOVE'S REQUIEM.

BRING withered autumn leaves,
  Call everything that grieves,
And build a funeral pyre above his head !
  Heap there all golden promise that deceives,
  Beauty, that wins the heart and then bereaves,—
    For Love is dead.

Not slowly did he die:
A meteor from the sky
Falls not so swiftly as his spirit fled,
When, with regretful, half-averted eye,
He gave one little smile, one little sigh,
And so was sped.

But O, not yet, not yet
Would my lost soul forget
How beautiful he was while he did live;
Or, when his eyes were dewy and lips wet,
What kisses, tenderer than all regret,
My love would give.

Strew roses on his breast!
He loved the roses best;
He never cared for lilies or for snow.
Let be this bitter end of his sweet quest;
Let be the pallid silence that is rest—
And let all go!

THE YELLOW ROSE.

AH, had we met in other days, before
my soul had known
What 'tis to smile o'er ruined hopes, in
mockery and alone,

Perchance it then had been my lot, which
now can never be,
To make thy heart, that beats for none,
beat warm and true for me.

But now the shadows round my way are
gathering dark and grim,
The wind blows coldly off the shore, the
lights are growing dim,
The angry waters rage and roar, and head-
long through the night
From love, from hope, from thee, my barque
goes plunging out of sight.

And so I waft my fond farewell across the
darkening brine :
Thy heart can never, never bring the peace
of love to mine :
There is no peace for evermore, in earth or
heaven, for me—
But, O, if this could once have been, how
lovely life would be !

I see thee on the distant shore, in all thy
glittering grace,
The sunshine streaming round thy form,
and hope upon thy face ;
And I shall see those glorious eyes and hear
that voice divine
Till Fate has stilled this wayward heart,
but true till death to thine.

Nor chance nor change can ever dim the
glory of that brow,
The light will shine for ever there that
shines upon thee now,
And tempest-tossed and far away upon the
sea of sin
I yet shall know, though lost to me, there
was a heaven to win.

I did not think that time or grief could ever
break the pride
That lets my soul reveal the truth it now
no more can hide,
But lonely o'er the wreck of youth its fires
are burning yet—
And would to God that I had died or ever
we had met!

VIOLET.

ONE name I shall not forget—
Gentle name of Violet.

Many and strange the years have sped;
She who bore that name is dead;

Dead—and resting by the sea,
Where she gave her heart to me.

Dead—and now the grasses wave,
And the dry leaves, o'er her grave,

Rustling in the autumn wind,
Like the sad thoughts in my mind.

She was light, and soon forgot;
Loved me well, and loved me not:

Changeful as the April sky—
Kind or cruel, sad or shy;

Grey-eyed, winsome, arch, and fair—
My youth's passion and despair.

Now, through storms of many years,
Now, through tender mist of tears,

Looking backward, I can see
She was always true to me.

Yet, with prisoned tears that burn,
Cold we parted, wayward, stern;

Spoke the quiet, farewell word,
Neither meant and neither heard;

Spoke—and parted in our pain,
Never more to meet again.

Sometimes underneath the moon,
On rose-laden nights of June,—

When white clouds drift o'er the blue,
While the pale stars glimmer through,

And the honeysuckle throws
Fragrant challenge to the rose,

And the liberal pine-tree flings
Perfume on the midnight's wings,—

Came, with thrills of hope and fear,
Mystic sense that she was near;

Came the thought,—Through good and ill
She loves, and she remembers still!

But no word e'er came, or went;
And, when nine long years were spent,

Something in my bosom said,
Very softly,—she is dead!

Now, at sombre autumn eve,
Wandering where the woodlands grieve,

Or where wild winds whistle free,
On the hills that front the sea,

Cruel thoughts of love and loss
Nail my spirit to the cross.

Friends have fallen, youth is gone,
Fields are brown and skies are wan,

One name I shall not forget—
Gentle name of Violet.

ASLEEP.

I.

HE knelt beside her pillow, in the dead watch of the night,
And he heard her gentle breathing, but her face was still and white,
And on her poor, wan cheek a tear told how the heart can weep,
And he said, "My love was weary—God bless her ! she 's asleep."

II.

He knelt beside her grave-stone, in the shuddering autumn night,
And he heard the dry grass rustle, and his face was thin and white,

And through his heart the tremor ran of
grief that cannot weep,
And he said, "My love was weary—God
bless her ! she 's asleep."

A SOUVENIR.

AH, Lily, when my head lies low,
In yonder quiet woodland dell,—
Where the wild-flowers will sweetly blow,
Above the eyes that loved them well,—
How soon thy sorrow would depart,
If word of mine could soothe thy heart !

Somewhere, some day, we meet again !
Think this—and be this thought relief !
In life I have not brought thee pain ;
In death I must not bring thee grief.
Strew with the flowers of hope my pall,
And gently mourn, or not at all !

DOOM.

A RAVEN flew over the house-top,
In the gloaming that heralds the night:
Far off snarled the threat of the thunder,
And the raven he croaked in his flight.

A raven flew over the house-top,
And his shadow fell dark on my heart:
A voice, in its innermost chamber,
Said, "The angel of love must depart.

Too long you are calm in the sunshine,
And too long are the roses in bloom:
Time now for the rush of the tempest,
For the chill, and the blight, and the gloom." . . .

Deserted the house is, and silent;
Even storm is too gentle to rave:
For Love, that made living celestial,
Is a spectre that dreams on a grave.

PREDESTINED.

A CALM, cold face, as white and clear
As marble, and as passionless:
Eyes darkly sad, that tell no fear,
No hope, no pleasure, no distress:

A smile, that seems all o'er to sleep,
As sleeps a sunbeam on a stone;
A quiet voice, but soft and deep,
And full of music, every tone:

A courtly manner,—he is true
To social usage, and will pay
To all the world its proper due
Of graceful, stately courtesy :—

Behold, an awful thought it is
That such a ghastly, gaunt despair
Can wear a shape so grand as this,
A face so noble and so fair !

For that is not a common grief
Which tears his heart and burns his brain
Who feels eternity too brief
For his tremendous trance of pain !

Whose soul endures infernal woes,
Enchained by some infernal spell ;
Who knows not peace, but only knows
The lurid, withering fires of hell !

ACCOMPLICES.

[The Murderer.]

BLACK rocks upon the dreadful coast,
Mutter no more our hidden crime !
I hear, far off, your sullen boast,
But I defy you ! 'tis not time !

You cannot tell our secret yet ;
  The trusty sea must keep its dead,
And many suns arise and set
  Before that awful word is said.

I am but young ; I 've all the grace
  Of life, and love, and beauty now :
There 's not a wrinkle on my face ;
  There 's not a shadow on my brow.

I cannot bear the darksome grave,
  I will not leave the cheerful sun !
Rave on ! in storm and midnight rave,
  For years and years, till all is done.

Till these brown locks are changed to grey ;
  Till these clear eyes are dim and old ;
Not yet, not yet the fatal day
  When all that horror must be told !

But, then—gnash all your jagged teeth,
  And howl for vengeance ! I will come ;
And that same cruel pit beneath
  Shall yawn and gulf me to my home.

To-day—forbear, nor mutter more !
  The sky is dark, and dark the sea,
And all the land from shore to shore
  Is hideous with your grisly glee.

SEMPER IDEM.

THIS is the place where he brought her home—
Home,—but not to his heart, I know :
For it cannot be but her memories roam
To the first and the true love, long ago
Noble and lovely and wretched bride,
Doomed, in her gorgeous palace of stone,
Loveless for ever, to sit by his side,
And yet be, for ever and ever, alone !

Noble and beautiful spirit of love !
Well, I can wish you were happy,—though
I stand out here, while the stars above
Are as white and cold as the ground below.
I am glad that the splendour is all your own ;
I do not desire it—ah, not I !
But am well content, at the foot of your throne,
To sink in the frozen street, and die.

Perhaps you would see me, then—who knows?
Perhaps you would see, in my haggard face,
Whence they have risen—your subtle woes,
And the something that saddens your stately grace.

Perhaps—ah me, I am bold indeed !—
Perhaps you would touch me ! Heart and brain !
I am sure it would make the old wound bleed,
If it did not wake me to life again !

Lost—but I love you, all the same :
'T was a faithful heart that you threw away :
I can say it now, and with nothing of shame,
For I shall not live to another day.
I can say, though the night of grief was long,
That the light of morning struggles through ;
And, lifted out of my sorrow and wrong,
If I cannot live, I can die, for you !

ACROSS THE PALL.

NOW she lies here, dead before you,
Motionless and grey as stone ;
Now the cruel grief broods o'er you,
Stricken, agonised, and lone ;
Now that passion's dream is past,
Well it is we meet at last !

Ay, you loved her—loved her truly—
With the utmost faith of man;
Sacrificing all things, duly,
As a noble lover can!
And she made you—what I see;
What 'tis well that you can be.

Loved her? Virtue, truth, and honour,
Sense, and manhood—what are they?
Stand up here, and look upon her!
'Tis a pretty piece of clay.
Others, quite as fond and true,
Loved her, quite as well as you.

So I pity you, poor dreamer
(Would to God our dreams were long!),
And I would not make it seem her
Guilt, that e'er she did me wrong.
She was heavenly—cloud and star;
She was what the angels are.

Hope and wait; and when you meet her,
With them, in the Eden plain,
Clasp her to your soul, and greet her,
With a word of noble pain.
Tell her, in yon starry cope,
That I taught you how to hope.

Time and tide flow on for ever;
Pleasure's ghost is always pain;
Life is fevered with endeavour,
Sad with loss, and sweet with gain.
But there is no certain bliss
In this world for only this.

Look up bravely where, forgiven,
Erring hearts repentant rest:
Only love and trust find heaven!
Still the faithful are the blest:
Faithful love, that ransoms you,
Well may save your idol too.

But, for me there is no morrow,
Crown of love nor crown of fame:
I must tread a mighty sorrow
In the mire of sensual shame.
Down I grovel on the earth,
Wasting toward a brutish birth!

'Tis a world of commonplaces,
Empty hearts, and shallow brains,
Flaunting fools with specious faces,
Black desires and crimson stains.
When I found that heart untrue,
Love itself was falsehood too.

Always round us are the curses,
And the long, tumultuous roar:
We are jostled in our hearses,
Even as we were before.
They alone escape the strife
Who attain the spirit's life.

Hope, I say, till you receive her;
Hope, for we are only men.
Lay her in the grave, and leave her
Just your heart, to keep till then.
Take my blessing—for I know
All your love and all your woe.

ORGIA.

WHO cares for nothing alone is free,—
Sit down, good fellow, and drink with me!

With a careless heart and a merry eye,
He laughs at the world, as the world goes by.

He laughs at power, and wealth, and fame;
He laughs at virtue, he laughs at shame;

He laughs at hope, and he laughs at fear;
At memory's dead leaves, crisp and sere;

He laughs at the future, cold and dim,—
Nor earth nor heaven is dear to him.

O, that is the comrade fit for me!
He cares for nothing, his soul is free;

Free as the soul of the fragrant wine—
Sit down, good fellow, my heart is thine!

For I heed not custom, creed, nor law;
I care for nothing that ever I saw.

In every city my cups I quaff,
And over the chalice I riot and laugh.

I laugh, like the cruel and turbulent wave;
I laugh at the church, and I laugh at the grave.

I laugh at joy, and well I know
That I merrily, merrily laugh at woe!

I terribly laugh, with an oath and a sneer,
When I think that the hour of death is near.

For I know that death is a guest divine,
Who shall drink my blood as I drink this
wine.

And he cares for nothing! a king is he—
Come on, old fellow, and drink with me!

With you I will drink to the solemn past,
Though the cup that I drain should be my last.

I will drink to the phantoms of love and truth;
To ruined hopes and a wasted youth.

I will drink to the woman who wrought my woe,
In the diamond morning of long ago:

To a heavenly face, in sweet repose,
To the lily's snow and the blood of the rose;

To the splendour, caught from orient skies,
That thrilled in the dark of her hazel eyes,—

Her large eyes, wild with the fire of the south,—
And the dewy wine of her warm, red mouth.

I will drink to the thought of a better time;
To innocence, gone like a death-bell chime.

I will drink to the shadow of coming doom;
To the phantoms that wait in my lonely tomb.

I will drink to my soul, in its terrible mood,
Dimly and solemnly understood.

And, last of all, to the monarch of sin,
Who conquered that palace and reigns within.

My sight is fading—it dies away—
I cannot tell is it night or day.

My heart is burnt and blackened with pain,
And a horrible darkness crushes my brain.

I cannot see you—the end is nigh—
But we 'll laugh together before I die.

Through awful chasms I plunge and fall——

EREBUS.

THERE 's a mossy sunken grave,
In the solemn land of dreams,
All alone ;
Where the dusky branches wave
O'er the banks of sable streams,
With a moan :
A dull sky spans it overhead,
Like a tomb ;
The wan stars glimmer far away
In the gloom ;
And a pale moon gleams
On the haunts of the dead,
Where the ghouls and the demons play.

And the souls that wander here
See each other very clear ;
And remember,—but weep not !
Remember,—but sleep not !
Remember,—but cannot pray !

THE WRECKER'S BELL.

I.

THERE 's a lurid light in the clouds to-
night,
In the wind there 's a desolate moan ;
And the rage of the furious sea is white,
Where it beats on the crags of stone :
Stand here at my side, and look over the
tide,
And say if you hear it,—the sullen knell,
Faint, from afar, on the harbour-bar,
The hollow boom of the wrecker's bell.
For I cannot hear—I am cold with fear—
Ah, leave me not alone !
For I 'm old, I 'm old, and my blood is cold,
And I fear to be alone.

II.

With a shudder I saw his ashen face,
In that wild and fearful night—
For his blazing eyes illumed the place
With a terrible, ghastly light;
And ever his long locks floated out,
As white as the foam of the sea;
And the great waves dashed on the rocks about
With a mad and cruel glee.
But I stood by his side, and looked over the tide,
And faintly I heard that solemn knell,
Faint, from afar, on the harbour-bar,
The hollow boom of the wrecker's bell.

III.

It is but the clang of the signal bell,
That floats through the midnight air:
For many a year in the surging swell
Has the old bell sounded there.
When the storm in his might rides through the night
And his steeds in thunder neigh,
Then its iron tongue is swayed and swung,
And plunged in the angry spray;
And so when the summer skies are bright,
And the breakers are at play.

But wherefore is it you stay me here,
And why do you shudder and moan,
And what are the nameless shapes you fear
In this desolate place alone?
For your eyes are set in a dreadful glare,
And you shrink at the solemn knell,
As it trembles along the midnight air—
The boom of the wrecker's bell.

IV.

Look up, he cried, to the awful sky,
Look over the furious sea,
And mark, as the grinning fiends float by,
How they beckon and howl to me!
They are ringing my knell with the baleful bell,
And they gloat on the doom to be.
Ah! give me your hand, and look not back—
We stand not here alone—
And the horrible shapes that throng my track
Would turn your heart to stone.
The spell of the dead is on the hour,
And I yield my soul to its fearful power.

V.

A face looks forth in the darkness there,
A young face, sweet with a rosy light:
The sunshine sleeps in her golden hair,
And her violet eyes are softly bright:

On her parted lips there 's an innocent smile,
Like a sunbeam kissing a velvet rose ;
And her cheeks of pearl grow warm the while,
With a delicate blush that comes and goes.
Ah ! purer than morn in its purest hour,
And holy as one from an angel clime,
Was the tender woman, the beautiful flower,
I loved and lost in the far-off time.

VI.

One fatal night, in the long ago,
My gallant cruiser passed that bar.
In a bank of clouds the moon hung low,
And the sombre sky showed never a star.
The night was calm, but I heard in the swell
A murmur of storm, and, far away,
The muffled toll of the wrecker's bell,
As it floated up from the outer bay.
And a look of hate in the waiting waves
Spoke to my soul of a place of graves.

VII.

I watched them there, as I stood at the wheel,—
The happy lover, the radiant bride,—
And the wasting fever of frantic pain
And ruthless jealousy burnt my brain ;
And I felt what only demons feel,
For the man who walked by that woman's side.

With gentle murmur the lovers talked,
As to and fro on the deck they walked.
Nothing they thought of danger then,
Or the schemes and crimes of wicked men.
Wrapt in a quiet dream of bliss,
And consecrate with a marriage kiss,
What could those innocent creatures know
Of the burning hate and the maddening woe
And the deadly purpose of blind despair,
In the heart of the fiend beside them there!

VIII.

An hour had passed—he stood alone,—
I thought no creature saw the blow
That felled him, senseless as a stone,
Or heard the pitiful, low moan,
His death-sigh, as he sank below
These very waters where they flow
Around that vengeful bell.
But joy, like grief, will vigils keep,
And love hath eyes that never sleep,
And secret tongues that tell.
She passed me like a bolt of light,
A heavenly angel robed in white!
One dazzling gleam, one cry so shrill
That sea and sky and this lone hill
Are echoing with its anguish still—
And she had leaped into the night:

And on her murdered lover's breast
In the same wave she sunk to rest.
That moment o'er the sky
Flamed the red wrath of such a storm
As might enwreathe the Avenger's form
When howling fiends defy.
No ship could live in the gale that blew,
And mine went down with all her crew—
I only left alive.
Spurned upward out of weltering hell
To that same reef where swings the bell
That, ever since, with fateful spell
Hath drawn me by its hideous knell,
I breathed, and ceased to strive—
I, whom the lightning will not rend,
Nor waves engulf, nor death befriend,
Nor holy father shrive ! . . .

IX.

There 's a lurid light in the clouds to-night,
In the wind there 's a desolate moan ;
But the waves roll soft on the sand so white,
And break on the crags of stone ;
And the sea-gulls scream in their frolic flight,
And all my dream is flown.
But, far away in the twilight gloom,
I still can hear it, the muffled boom,—

And it seems to be ringing a dead man's knell,—
Solemn and slow, of the wrecker's bell.

AFTER LONG YEARS.

DEAR heart, and true, in the seasons fled,
Has the world swept by me, and left me dead?

Have the pansies withered, I used to know?
Are the roses faded, of long ago?

Do the tapers glimmer, that lit the feast?
Has the pageant passed? has the music ceased?

And, musing here on the sea-beat coast,
Am I living man, or a wandering ghost?

Still in the scent of the autumn air
I feel a rapture that 's like despair:

The starlight, pale on the sleeping sea,
Is a nameless, sorrowful joy to me:

And, lit by orb or crescent of night,
Meadow and woodland are brave to sight.

Still I bend to the mystic power
Of the strange sea-breeze and the breath of
flower;

And the face of beauty wakes the wraith
Of holy passion and knightly faith!

But, ever I hear an undertone—
A subtle, sorrowful, wordless moan;

The dying note of a funeral bell;
The faltering sigh of a last farewell:

And ever I see, through lurid haze,
The sombre phantoms of other days;

In light that 's sad as the ruin it frets,—
The solemn light of a sun that sets.

Ah, never again can youth dream on
As it used to dream in the summers gone!

For round it dashes the tide of years;
Its eyes are darkened with mist of tears;

Its hopes are sere as the fading grass,
And nothing it wished has come to pass.

Yet ever, in wayward, passionate power,
Like a wind that moans through a ruined
tower,

O'er memory's darkening fields along
It rustles the fallen leaves of song :

And, wild in the heart, it wakes the thrill
That nothing but death can ever still !

ROSEMARY.

THE moonbeams on the water sleep,
In breathing light ;
And tender thoughts and memories keep
My soul to-night.

Shades of sweet hours, for ever gone,
Come, all unsought,
And waves of mournful joy dance on
The stream of thought.

A dreamy fragrance seems to rise
From other years—
A solemn bliss, that dims the eyes
With happy tears.

Life wears the glow of rosy grace
That once it wore,
And smiles are lit on many a face
That smiles no more.

The gentle friends I used to greet,
All, all are here :
All forms are fair, all voices sweet,
All memories dear.

All happy thoughts, all glorious dreams,
That once were mine,
Rise, in the tender light that beams
From auld lang syne.

But something in the heart is wrong,—
The joyous sway,
The spirit and the voice of song
Have died away.

These winds, that on their cloudy cars
Sweep through the sky,
These wandering, watching, deathless stars,
My prayer deny.

These low, sweet murmurs from the land
And from the sea,
These waves, that kiss the silver sand,
Speak not to me.

And not to me one voice shall speak
For evermore,
Though the same waves in beauty break
On the same shore.

Shine stars, sob waves, and murmur blast,
And night-dews, weep!
To wait is left me, and at last
The dreamless sleep.

THE ANGEL DEATH.

COME with a smile, when come thou must,
Evangel of the world to be,
And touch and glorify this dust,—
This shuddering dust, that now is me,—
And from this prison set me free!

Long in those awful eyes I quail,
That gaze across the grim profound:
Upon that sea there is no sail,
Nor any light nor any sound
From the far shore that girds it round:

Only—two still and steady rays
That those twin orbs of doom o'ertop ;
Only—a quiet, patient gaze
That drinks my being, drop by drop,
And bids the pulse of nature stop.

Come with a smile, auspicious friend,
To usher in the eternal day !
Of these weak terrors make an end,
And charm the paltry chains away
That bind me to this timorous clay !

And let me know my soul akin
To sunrise, and the winds of morn,
And every grandeur that has been
Since this all-glorious world was born,—
Nor longer droop in my own scorn.

Come, when the way grows dark and chill !
Come, when the baffled mind is weak,
And in the heart that voice is still,
Which used in happier days to speak,
Or only whispers, sadly meek.

Come with a smile that dims the sun !
With pitying heart and gentle hand !
And waft me, from my vigil done,
To peace, that waits on thy command,
In some mysterious better land.

BEYOND THE DARK.

THERE 's a region afar from earth
  Should be very happy to-day ;
For a sweet soul, ripe for its birth,
  Has flown from its prison away.

And I think, as I muse alone,
  While the night is falling around,
Of a cold, white, glimmering stone,
  And a long, lone, grassy mound ;

And of what rests under the sod,—
  White relic and motionless brain,
Left awfully still by the spirit of God,
  That has gone to Him again ;

The eyes that will shine no more,
  The hands that have done their task ;—
And my heart is heavy and sore,
  And my thought is eager to ask

If all will, at last, be well
  In the realms beyond the dark ;
What secret the pallid lips could tell
  Of the sleeper, quiet and stark.

But there comes a murmur of trees,
That wave their arms, and bring
Blossoms and leaves, to shake in the breeze,
From spring to spring ;

And they whisper that all is well,
For the same hand guides us all,
Whether 'tis seen in a man's death-knell,
Or in the leaves that fall.

And so many have gone before,
That the voice of another sphere
Floats often from over a sable shore,
And pierces the mist of fear.

O tender heart that is still,
You will falter with trouble no more,
Nor know of the good or the ill
Of a frantic world's uproar !

Nor heed the great or the small
Of a strange, bewildering life,
That often seems dust and ashes all,
And is mostly a vapid strife !

For the end is the peace of grass,
And God's peace, ever to be :
The one for us to feel as we pass,
The other enshrining thee.

Clouds sail and waters flow,
And our souls must journey on;
But it cannot be ill to go
The way that thou hast gone.

AT PEACE.

GREEN trees, and quiet fields, and sunset light,
With holy silence, save for rippling leaves
And birds that twitter of the coming night,
Calling their mates, beneath my cottage eaves—
These Fate hath granted for a little space
To be companions of my pilgrimage,
Filling my grateful heart with nature's grace.

Not unremembered here life's garish stage,
Nor the wild city's uproar, nor the race
For gain and power, in which we all engage;
But here remembered dimly, in a dream,
As something fretful that hath ceased to fret—
Here, where time lapses like a gentle stream,
Hid in the woodland's heart, and I forget
To note its music and its silver gleam.

But never, never let me cease to know,
O whispering woods and daisy-sprinkled grass,
The beauty and the peace that you bestow,
When the wild fevers of ambition pass,
And the worn spirit, in its gloom and grief,
Sinks on your bosom and there finds relief!

EGERIA.

THE star I worship shines alone,
In native grandeur set apart;
Its light, its beauty, all my own,
And imaged only in my heart.

The flower I love lifts not its face
For other eyes than mine to see;
And, having lost that sacred grace,
'Twould have no other charm for me.

The hopes I bear, the joys I feel,
Are silent, secret, and serene;
Pure is the shrine at which I kneel,
And purity herself my queen.

I would not have an impious gaze
Profane the altar where are laid
My hopes of nobler, grander days,
By heaven inspired, by earth betrayed.

I would not have the noontide sky
  Pour down its bold, obtrusive light
Where all the springs of feeling lie,
  Deep in the soul's celestial night.

Far from the weary strife and noise,
  The tumult of the great to-day,
I guard my own congenial joys,
  And keep my own sequestered way.

For all that world is cursed with care;
  Has nothing holy, nothing dear,
No light, no music anywhere,—
  It will not see, it will not hear.

But thou, sweet spirit, viewless power,
  Whom I have loved and trusted long,—
In pleasure's day, in sorrow's hour,—
  Muse of my life and of my song;

Breathe softly, thou, with peaceful voice,
  In my soul's temple, vast and dim!
In thy own perfect joy rejoice,
  With morning and with evening hymn!

And though my hopes around me fall
  Like rain-drops in a boundless sea,
I will not think I lose them all
  While yet I keep my trust in thee!

JUBEL,

OR

THE TRIUMPH.

SURGE up in wanton waves to-day,
Ye memories of a restless Past!
In shine and shadow glance and play,—
This golden moment is your last.

Float, phantoms, o'er a sapphire sea,—
Remembered joy, remembered pain,
Passions and fears that used to be,
But never can be mine again!

Sweet visions, faded long ago,
So beautiful, and once so dear,—
That wrought my bliss, that wrought my woe,—
Your welcome and farewell are here.

For now no more can fancy wile
My steadfast soul with dreams untrue:
I give you each a parting smile,
I give you all a glad adieu.

Henceforth, for me, the Past is dead,
And sunken deep in Lethe's waves:
Firm is the ground whereon I tread,
That will not know the shape of graves.

As one whose soul, in second birth,
Attains its natural height and scope,
I spurn away the dust of earth,
I scale the radiant peaks of hope.

The sunshine wraps me in its arms,
North winds of power around me blow,
And heaven's ablaze with starry charms
To bless the path whereon I go.

For mine is now the ardent truth
And secret of the lover's kiss;
The valley of immortal youth;
The sacred mountain-height of bliss!

A POET.

I.

ORDAINED to work the heavenly will
Comes a bright angel, sent from far;
And Nature feels another thrill,
And Love has lit another star.

II.

Earth was more beautiful because of him.
Wild flowers were born ;
And limpid, bickering brooks,
The poet's earliest books,
Spoke of a new delight
Unto the morn :
And, in the fragrant night,
When fairies, sporting underneath the moon,
In airy glee
And revelry,
Made the wide darkness beautifully bright,
Like brightest noonday in the heart of June,
Every billow laughed, and after
Seemed to chase its nimble laughter ;
Till spent,
With emulous merriment,
It sunk to sleep in some secluded, cool,
And black and lucent pool.

III.

On meadows starred with daisies
The wild bee swooned, in mazes
Of witching odour, richer far
Than spikenard, rose, and jasmine are.
All natural objects seemed to catch a rare
and precious gleam.

Unknowing why, the happy birds
Trilled out their hearts in seeming joyous words,
All indistinct, though sweet, to mortal ears ;
Such as a poet hears,
With joy and yet with tears,
In some ethereal reverie, half vision and half dream.

Through breezy tree-tops jocund voices thrilled,
And, deep in slumberous caverns of the ocean,
Wild Echo heard, and with an airy motion
Tossed back the greeting of a heart o'er-filled
With gladness, and that speaks it o'er and o'er,
Till bliss can say no more.
The waves that whispered on the listening sands
Told the glad tidings unto many lands,
And the stars heard, and from their wandering isles
Dropt down the blessing of their golden smiles. . . .

IV.

Touched by the lightning of the Maker's eyes
He spake in prophecies,
Interpreting the earth, the sea, the skies—
All that in Nature is of mystery,
All that in Man is dark,
All that the perfect future is to be,
When quenched our mortal spark
And souls imprisoned are at last set free.
Backward he gazed, across the eternal sea,
And on the ever-lessening shores of time
Saw ghosts of ruined empires wandering slow.
Then, onward looking, saw the radiant bow
Of promise, shining o'er a heavenly clime.
And thus he knew of life its mystic truth—
Hope, with perpetual youth,
And that wherein all doubt and trouble cease,
Sweet child of patience, peace.

V.

And now came death, a gentle, welcome guest,
And touched his hand and led him into rest.
Time paid its tribute to eternity—
A great soul, ripe for the immortal day—

And earth embraced his ashes: cold their bed,
For now the aged year was also dead.
The winter wind shrieked loud, with hoarse alarms,
The keen stars shivered in the midnight air,
And the bare trees stretched forth their stiffened arms
To the wan sky, in pale and speechless prayer.

VI.

Speak softly here, and softly tread,
For all the place is holy ground
Where Nature's love enshrines her dead,
And earth with blessing folds them round.

He rests at last: the world far-off
May riot in her mad excess,
But now her plaudit and her scoff
To him alike are nothingness.

He learned in depths where virtue fell
The heights to which the soul may rise:
He sounded the abyss of hell,
He scaled the walls of paradise.

What else? Till every wandering star
In heaven's blue vault be cold and dim,
Our faithful spirits, following far,
Walk in the light that falls from him.

BEAUTY.

I HAD a dream, one glorious, summer night,
In the rich bosom of imperial June.
Languid I lay upon an odorous couch,
Golden with amber, festooned wildly o'er
With crimson roses; and the longing stars
Wept tears of light upon their clustered leaves.
Above me soared the azure vault of heaven,
Vast and majestic; cinctured with that path
Whereby, perchance, the sea-born Venus found
Her way to higher spheres; that path which seems
A coronet of silver, gemmed with stars,
And bound upon the forehead of the night.
There, as I lay, the musical south wind
Shook all the roses into murmurous life,
And poured their fragrance o'er me, in a shower

Of crimson mist; and softly, through the mist,
Came a low, sweet, enchanting melody,
A far-off echo from the land of dreams,
Which with delicious languor filled the air,
And steeped in bliss the senses and the soul.
Then rose a shape, a dim and ghostly shape,
Whereto no feature was, nor settled form,
A shadowy splendour, seeming as it came
A pearly summer cloud, shot through and through
With faintest rays of sunset; yet within
A spirit dwelt; and, floating from within,
A murmur trembled sweetly into words:—
I am the ghost of a most lovely dream,
Which haunted, in old days, a poet's mind.
And long he sought for, wept, and prayed for me;
And searched through all the chambers of his soul,
And searched the secret places of the earth,
The lonely forest and the lonely shore;
And listened to the voices of the sea,
What time the stars shone out, and midnight cold
Slept on the dark waves whispering at his feet;
And sought the mystery in a human form,
Amid the haunts of men, and found it not;

And looked in woman's fond, bewildering
eyes,
And mirrored there his own, and saw no
sign:
But only in his sleep I came to him,
And gave him fitful glimpses of my face,
Whereof he after sang, in sweetest words;
Then died, and came to me. But evermore,
Through lonely days and passion-haunted
nights,
A life of starlight gloom, do poets seek
To rend the mystic veil that covers me,
And evermore they grasp the empty air.
For only in their dreams I come to them,
And give them fitful glimpses of my face,
And lull them, siren-like, with words of
hope—
That promise, sometime, to their ravished
eyes,
Beauty, the secret of the universe,
God's thought, that gives the soul eternal
peace.

Then the voice ceased, and only, through
the mist,
The shaken roses murmured, and the wind.

PERDITA.

I WATCHED your ship where, strong and bright,
She sailed into the gathering night
And sped away;
I saw the sunset colours die
And grey gloom wrap the evening sky
And veil the day.

I heard the cold waves on the shore
Their pensive sorrow o'er and o'er
In murmurs tell,
While, as the glimmering sea grew dim,
The wind sang low its vesper hymn—
Farewell, Farewell.

What thoughts of blessing and of prayer
I wafted on the twilight air,
What fancies drear
Possessed my soul, no words could say—
Yet holy angels listening may
Its homage hear.

I mused upon your parting word,
The low, sad whisper, scarcely heard,
Your angel face,
And—fadeless flowers in Memory's track —
The happy days, that come not back,
Of Fortune's grace.

Days when we roved on Avon's side,
Or wandered by the rushing tide
Of bickering Stour,
Or in the great cathedral strayed—
Where to be worthy still I prayed
Of one so pure.

The sunset mist, the golden town,
When we strolled home from Harbledown,
The merry bands
Of rustic girls who bore, for sign
Of prospered toil, the fragrant vine
In tawny hands ;

The quiet streets, as evening fell,
The minster's gloom, the solemn bell,
The scented air,
The rooks that thronged the giant trees,
The churchyard stones and, over these,
The moonlight fair,—

I felt them all, as though that they
Had been the things of yesterday,
And chill regret
Preyed on my lonely heart, to think
How soon the stars of pleasure sink
And we forget.

The Thames is flowing, broad and free,
'Neath that old bridge of Battersea,
Where, veiled in gloom,
Great St. John sleeps—too sound to wake,
For all the vows that lovers make
Beside his tomb.

The emerald throstle's silver call
Is heard by Leicester's haunted hall,
And down the vale
Of Kenilworth the hawthorns wreath,
And roses tremble, underneath
The starlight pale.

The winds of night sigh softly through
The needles of St. Martin's yew,
And round the shrines
Of grey St. Nicholas, the lone
And melancholy breezes moan,
And ivy twines.

From those proud cliffs that smile on France
You still might see the moonbeams dance
O'er midnight waves ;—
Are all the reveries sublime
And holy thoughts of that sweet time
Lost in their graves ?

Is the light faded, has the ray
Of heaven become the common day,
And from your breast
The careless warder Time let slip
The sense of fond companionship
That was its guest ?

I will not think it—though, for me,
By day or night, by land or sea,
Ah, nevermore
Can those exalted moments seem
Like aught but some bewildered dream
Of fairy lore !

I do not think it—those clear eyes
The light that burns in Paradise
Is shining through ;
And all that radiant Woman brought
Of holy faith from God's own thought
Is shrined in you !

Farewell, Farewell—the sands of gold
Have run their course, the tale is told,
And dark and fast
Night closes round my wandering way—
As round the set of that sad day
Which was our last.

Yet ever, while we walk this earth,
In shade or shine, in grief or mirth,
While life endures,
One thought must still our hearts entwine,—
And naught can take your place in mine,
Nor mine in yours.

THE VEILED MUSE.

SPIRIT of Beauty, haunt me not!
Thou bring'st insufferable pain:
Thou, who art gone, be thou forgot,
Nor rise to vex my rest again,
Either with memories sadly sweet,
Or hopes foredoomed to dull defeat!

Ah, come no more in rustling leaves,
Or peaceful grass, or breath of flowers!
Enough this baffled spirit grieves,
Remembering thee in rosy hours:
Spare it the throbs of hope and fear,—
The cruel sense that thou art near!

The passion dies within my soul;
  The music dies within my brain;
Save when there comes a funeral toll—
  A low, lamenting, sad refrain,
An echo from that shrine of song
Long darkened, and deserted long.

In what was fair I once had part,
  But all fair things are now my shame:
Their nameless beauty hurts my heart,
  Because I cannot speak its name:
Spoken, 'twould make my soul rejoice;
But, O, I cannot give it voice.

Once in these veins the blood was warm;
  With ardent hope this heart beat high;
And the great gales that proudly storm
  The loftiest ramparts of the sky
Were not more daring, fierce, and strong
Than this now silent soul of song.

But wasted now that youth of gold,
  Not heaven itself again could give;
And he to die may well be bold
  Who is not bold enough to live—
In haunted silence of disgrace,
Where hushed thy voice and veiled thy face.

Ah, come no more to do me wrong,
In twilight hours of tender dream,
When this worn spirit seems less strong
Than evening mist that shrouds the stream.
Though love be dead, at least retain
Some pity for thy lover's pain :

Remembering still, though all be past,
That thou and I clasped hands in youth :
I saw thee close, I held thee fast,
Plucked kisses from thy rosy mouth—
Learning the bliss which now I weep,
The love I won but could not keep.

AT THE EBB TIDE.

IN dusky gloom she sits apart,
Beyond the moonlight's silver glow ;
And tender fancies break her heart,
That bloomed, and withered, long ago.

Her patient eyes are wet with tears,
Her face is pale with want and care,
And all the griefs of all her years,
Transfigured, crown her snowy hair.

Gaunt sorrow claims her, heart and brain ;
  She bears the burden of the cross ;
She hears a solemn dirge of pain,
  The sad, old song of love and loss.

So glide the lonesome hours away ;
  The song is still, the grief is past :
Alike to her are night and day—
  And life and trouble rest at last.

THE LAST SCENE.

HERE she slumbers, white and chill ;
  Put your hand upon her brow ;
Her sad heart is very still,
  And she does not know you now.

Ah, the grave's a quiet bed ;
  She will sleep a pleasant sleep,
And the tears that you may shed
  Will not wake her,—therefore weep !

Weep,—for you have wrought her woe ;
  Mourn,—she mourned and died for you :
Ah, too late we come to know
  What is false and what is true !

RUE.

THE autumn wind is moaning in the leaves,
And the long grass is rustling on my grave :
Ah, would you have me think your heart now grieves
For her your waning passion would not save?

For I am dead ; know you not I am dead ?
Why will you haunt me in my rest to-night,—
Standing above, and listening overhead,
Where I am buried deep and out of sight?

Have you not wine and music, in your home,
And her fair form, and eyes so pure and proud
With love of you ? and wherefore do you roam
To vex me, lying silent in my shroud?

Seek your new love! She calls you, and the tears
Are warm on her pale face, and her young breast
Is full of doubt and sorrow—for she hears
Low-whispered words, that startle her from rest.

In from the night! the storm begins to stir:
I will be near, and ghostly eyes shall see
How you will kiss her lips, and say to her,
"Thine always, love," as once you said to me.

CONSTANCE.

WITH diamond dew the grass was wet,—
'Twas in the spring and gentlest weather,—
And all the birds of morning met,
And carolled in her heart together.

The wind blew softly o'er the land,
And softly kissed the joyous ocean:
He walked beside her on the sand,
And gave and won a heart's devotion.

The thistledown was in the breeze,
With birds of passage homeward flying;
His fortune lured him o'er the seas,
And on the shore he left her, sighing.

She saw his barque glide down the bay,
Through tears and fears she could not banish;
She saw his white sails melt away—
She saw them fade, she saw them vanish.

And "Go," she said, "for winds are fair,
And love and blessing round you hover;
When you sail backward through the air,
Then I will trust the word of lover."

Still ebbed, still flowed, the tide of years,
Now chilled with snows, now bright with roses,
And many smiles were turned to tears,
And sombre morns to radiant closes.

And many ships came sailing by,
With many a golden promise freighted;
But nevermore from sea or sky
Came love, to bless her heart that waited.

Yet on, by tender patience led,
Her sacred footsteps walked, unbidden,
Wherever sorrow bowed its head,
Or want, and care, and shame were hidden.

And they who saw her snow-white hair,
And dark, sad eyes, so deep with feeling,
Breathed all at once the chancel air,
And seemed to hear the organ pealing.

Till once, at shut of autumn day,
In marble chill she paused and hearkened,
With startled gaze where far away
The wastes of sky and ocean darkened.

There for a moment, faint and wan,
High up in air, and landward striving,
Stern-fore a spectral barque came on,
Across the purple sunset driving.

Then something out of night she knew,
Some whisper heard, from heaven descended,
And peacefully, as falls the dew,
Her long and lonely vigil ended.

The violet and the bramble-rose
Make glad the grass that dreams above her;
And, freed from time and all its woes,
She trusts again the word of lover.

THOUGHTS IN A CHURCHYARD.

THE lonesome wind of autumn grieves ;
The northern lights are seen ;
October sheds her changing leaves
Upon the churchyard green,
Where, sitting pensive in the sun,
While fading grasses wave,
I watch the crickets leap and run,
Upon a stranger's grave.

There is no sigh of fluttering leaf,
No sob of rustling grass ;
The breezes o'er this place of grief
In breathless whisper pass ;
Yet, like a murmur in a dream,
Purls on that insect voice—
That vacant tone, which does not seem
To mourn or to rejoice.

A tone that hath no soothing grace,
A tone that nothing saith,
A tone that 's like this solemn place
Of memory, tears, and death—
It darkens hope, it deepens gloom,
Black dread and doubt profound,
Turning the silence of the tomb
To more mysterious sound.

There 's night upon the face of fame,
  There 's night on beauty's eyes,
Nor pure renown nor glorious shame
  From out their ashes rise :
In vain the shrines of prayer are trod—
  Nor sound nor silence breathe
The thought that flowers upon this sod,
  The secret hid beneath.

Ah, piteous, desolate, and drear
  This nameless stranger's sleep,
O'er which the slowly dying year
  Is all that seems to weep !
God help him, in that bitter day,—
  His heart, his reason save,—
Who hears the crickets chirp, at play,
  Upon his darling's-grave !

THE SCEPTRE.

THE lengthening shadows eastward slope
  And evening, with her dewy urn,
Quenches the beacon orb of hope,
  To let the stars of patience burn.

The paths grow dim, the low winds sigh,
  The fluttering bird-notes faint and fail,
And slowly up the sombre sky
  The sad moon wanders, cold and pale.

Yet on for many a weary mile
Our pilgrim marches still must wend,
Through brier and flood, by lane and stile,
Before we reach our journey's end.

What word will cheer the jaded nerve?
What thought inspire, as on we fare,
The baffled mind, so prone to swerve
Beneath the leaden wings of Care?

Ah, Nature, when she made her toy,—
This wayward child of fire and clay,
The sport of every fickle joy
That ripples through his fleeting day,—

Gave him a fancy swift to breed
Delusive dreams for every hour—
Sirens that beckon and recede,
And phantom moods of bliss and power.

Some from the stars and flowers distil
The faith that these not vainly shine,—
That whispering wood and rock-crowned hill
And murmuring stream are all divine.

Some for a vanished love bewail—
Her eyes, the starry orbs of Fate,
And voice, more rich than summer gale,
That make the heaven in which they wait.

Some, self-enamoured, seem so dear,
So sacred, in their own kind eyes,
They cannot doubt what blossoms here
Must bloom again in Paradise.

Some from the written lore of sage
Evolve and shape the eternal plan;
Some calmly show the inspired page
That gives immortal life to man.

So onward down the dark ravine,—
Dim phantoms in a phantom night,—
We wander toward the realm unseen
Where nothing dwells but love and light.

Vain dreams! of mortal frailty wrought
And nameless dread of nameless ill!
Man's sceptre is the regnant thought
And towering calm of human will!

One lesson comes to all that live,
One final truth their lives declare,—
That earth has nought but toil to give,
And nought to teach but how to bear:

The chastened calm of dumb assent,
Though hope should wither or should bloom,
Blind to all purpose or event,
And silent, 'neath the eyes of doom.

This, only this, remains of all
The morning pomp of young belief—
That man, else Nature's abject thrall,
In God-like Will is Nature's chief.

Thought falters, faith is dazed with fear,
Earth keeps her secret, death is dumb:
This simply bears its burden here,
And dauntless fronts whate'er may come.

As some tall ship that braves the storm—
Straight out to sea her prow is bent,
Where, broken on her stalwart form,
The furies of the surge are spent:

Or, torn by rock and whelmed by wave,
Exultant when her doom is met,
She rears above her ocean grave
And sinks with every standard set.

THE WHITE FLAG.

I.

BRING poppies for a weary mind
That saddens in a senseless din,
And let my spirit leave behind
A world of riot and of sin,—
In action's torpor deaf and blind.

Bring poppies—that I may forget!
  Bring poppies—that I may not learn!
But bid the audacious sun to set,
  And bid the peaceful starlight burn
O'er buried memory and regret.

Then will the slumberous grasses grow
  Above the bed wherein I sleep;
While winds I love will softly blow,
  And dews I love will softly weep,
O'er rest and silence hid below.

Bring poppies,—for this toil is vain;
  I cannot guide the rush of life:
A stronger hand must grasp the rein,
  A stouter arm oppose the strife,
A braver heart defy the pain.

Youth was my friend,—but Youth had wings,
  And he has flown unto the day,
And left me, in a night of things,
  Bewildered, on a lonesome way,
And careless what the future brings.

Let there be sleep! nor any more
  The noise of useless deed or word;
While the free spirit hovers o'er
  A sea where not a sound is heard—
A sea of dreams, without a shore.

II.

Dark Angel, counselling defeat,
I see thy mournful, tender eyes;
I hear thy voice, so faint, so sweet,
And very dearly should I prize
Thy perfect peace, thy rest complete.

But is it rest to vanish hence,
To mix with earth, or sea, or air?
Is death indeed a full defence
Against the tyranny of care?
Or is it cruellest pretence?

And, if an hour of peace draws nigh,
Shall we, who know the arts of war,
Turn from the field and basely fly,
Nor take what Fate reserves us for,
Because we dream 'twere sweet to die?

What shall the untried warriors do,
If we, the battered veterans, fail?
How strive, and suffer, and be true,
In storms that make our spirits quail,
Except our valour lead them through?

Though for ourselves we droop and tire,
Let us at least for them be strong.
'Tis but to bear familiar fire;
Life at the longest is not long,
And peace at last will crown desire.

So, Death, I will not hear thee speak !
  But I will patiently endure
All storms of pain that time can wreak. . . .
  My flag be white because 'tis pure,
And not because my soul is weak !

LETHE.

SWEET oblivion, blood of grape,
  Let me take thy hue and shape !
Flood this heavy heart of mine !
Turn it into ruddy wine !
Through my veins, with golden glow,
Airy spirit, flash and flow !
Deify this clod of clay,
And waft my willing soul away !

Dark and sad my fancies are—
Tired of peace and tired of war.
Joke of jester, prank of clown,
Weigh my heavy eyelids down.
All philosophies are drear ;
Music's jargon in my ear ;
Endless tides of empty talk
Bubble round me where I walk ;
I am deafened by the din
That the world is wrangling in.

God of sunrise, fiery wine,
Let me lose my soul in thine !
Close my eyes and stop my tears
To all a mortal sees or hears :—
Roll of drums, and clash of swords,
Fretful snarl of angry words,
Church, and state, and bond, and free,
Party, creed, and policy,
Tattle, prattle, laugh, and groan,
Crozier, sceptre, flag, and throne,
Garrulous and grand debate,
Which of moles is small or great,
Whom to pray for, who shall pray,
And what the agile critics say.

Sun of rubies, radiant wine,
Melt my being into thine !
So my dream of death shall bless
Memory with forgetfulness.
No more weary, wasting thought
On a past so folly-fraught !
No more dreams of love-lit eyes,
Silken hair and tender sighs,
And wild kisses sweet, that shake
The frame of being !—poor mistake !
Nor that other, just as poor,—
Toil for praise of sage or boor ;
Fire, that burnishes a crown,
Fire, that burns a kingdom down,

Fire, that ravages his breast,
Who takes ambition for its guest!
But at last, instead of these,
Sunset cloud, and evening breeze,
Holy starlight shining dim,
Organ wail and vesper hymn,
Cypress wreath and asphodels,
Gentle toll of distant bells,—
All that makes the sleeper blest,
In a bed of endless rest.

When this farce of life is o'er,
Are we fretted any more?
Do they rest, I 'd like to know,
Under grass or under snow,
Who have gone that quiet way
You and I must go, some day?
If they do, it seems to me
Happy were it thus to be
Sleeping where the blackb'ries grow,
And the bramble-roses blow,
And the sunshine pours its gold
On mossy rock and woodland old,
While gentle winds, and clouds of fleece,
And rippling waters whisper—peace!

Vain the fancy: nothing dies:
Falling water falls to rise;

Round and round the atoms fly,—
Turf, and stone, and sea, and sky,
Vapour-drop, and blood of man,—
In the inexorable plan.
All is motion : nothing dies :
Mystery of mysteries !

Royal road of blest escape !
Sweet oblivion, blood of grape,
Let me take thy hue and shape !
In thy spirit floating free,
I shall be a reverie,
A flitting thought, a fading dream,
A melting cloud, a faint moonbeam,
A breath, a mist, a ghost of light,
To rise and vanish in the night,—
Unseeing all, by all unseen,
And being as I had not been.

DREAM THOUGHTS.

[In Memory of G. A.]

THE peace of this autumnal day
Allures my dreaming thoughts away
To that great world beyond the deep,
Where I so many treasures keep.

There, fond and true, one friend I find,
Whose tender heart and constant mind
Gave, while he lingered here on earth,
Comfort, and cheer, and hope, and mirth;
And still they waft a cordial breath
Across the icy waves of death.
His nature, while he dwelt below,
Was like these days: this season's glow,
The misty sky, the sleeping sea,
The browning grass, the burnished tree,
The wild-flowers, swinging o'er the brook,
Were in his heart as in his book.
Alive, he charmed away life's fret
With all the sunshine he could get,
And, when death whispered, softly crept
Into a quiet place and slept;
And Nature never saw such grace
As hallowed then his noble face.
And so, to think upon him here,
In this sweet season of the year,—
Which he so loved, which he was like
As clouds are to the clouds they strike,—
Is winning peace, and strength to live,
Beyond what all the world can give.

Ah, not to me, dear heart, was said
The word that crowned thy royal head
First with the aureole's light and bloom,
And then the amaranth of the tomb.

Fate gave thee power, and calm, and poise,
And all thy days and deeds were joys.
Thine were the forest and the flood,
The sunrise sparkled in thy blood,
And thou didst hold a careless flight
Above the dells and caves of night.
But ever through thy smile shone clear
The lustre of compassion's tear,
The pity of thy gentle mind,
And tenderness, for all mankind.
I saw thee with a wistful eye,
And saddened—and I knew not why ;
Till soon, too soon, thy summons came,
And thou wert nothing but a name.
Ah, day of misery and of moan,
When grief and I were left alone !

Fate gave not me her smile benign—
That pensive, playful calm of thine—
But early from her bosom cast,
To be the sport of every blast,
To war with passion, and to know
The sting of want, the pang of woe,—
Forcing a soul, for kindness born,
To every strife it held in scorn.
So, careless whether right or wrong,
I battled through the hostile throng,
And felt, whatever doom might be,
Or life or death the same to me.

'T was then across my pathway lone
The holy star of friendship shone !
'T was then thy kindness soothed my pain,
And arched the heaven of hope again !
As, sudden through the stormy dark,
Full on the tempest-battered barque,
Home's glad and golden beacons shine,
So flashed thy spirit upon mine :
And not, though Hope's last star were set
Could this true heart of mine forget !

Now, of our few but happy years
Remains this flower, that bloomed in tears
Not of the crown of life bereft
Is he who yet has patience left.
The haggard sky, the surf's dull roar,
The midnight storm, are mine no more :
But mine the gleam of setting sun,
The call of birds when day is done,
The last, sad light, so loath to pass
It weeps upon the golden grass,
The sigh of leaves in evening air,
The distant bell that calls to prayer,—
And nothing from my spirit bars
The benediction of the stars.

Ah, loved so well and mourned so long,
Here in my heart as in my song,

To thy dear memory let me raise
One tender strain of other days,
One pæan to the good thou wast,
One low lament for all I lost.
Yet, looking o'er life's arid track,
Kind soul, I would not wish thee back.
What sadder lot, what doom of fate,
More sterile is, more desolate,
Than here to goad our wearied powers,
And toil through times that are not ours !
Ah, no, the silence now is best,
The leaf down-fluttering o'er thy rest,
And every kind, caressing sigh
That Nature breathes o'er those that die
While thou, in some serener sphere,
Forgett'st the toils and troubles here ;
Or, made a part of flowers and trees,
Art pure, and calm, and safe, like these.
— Slow pales the light ; the day declines ;
The night-wind murmurs in the pines ;
The stars come out, and, far away,
Across the sweetly sleeping bay
One snow-white sail, by sunset kist,
Fades slowly in the ocean mist,
Fades—like all joys and griefs we know,
And like this dream of Long Ago.

October, 1881.

THE GOLDEN SILENCE.

WHAT though I sing no other song?
What though I speak no other word?
Is silence shame? Is patience wrong?—
At least one song of mine was heard:

One echo from the mountain air,
One ocean murmur, glad and free—
One sign that nothing grand or fair,
In all this world was lost to me.

I will not wake the sleeping lyre;
I will not strain the chords of thought;
The sweetest fruit of all desire
Comes its own way, and comes unsought.

Though all the bards of earth were dead,
And all their music passed away,
What nature wishes should be said
She 'll find the rightful voice to say!

Her heart is in the shimmering leaf,
The drifting cloud, the lonely sky,
And all we know of bliss or grief
She speaks, in forms that cannot die.

The mountain peaks that shine afar,
The silent stars, the pathless sea,
Are living signs of all we are,
And types of all we hope to be.

MY PALACES.

THEY rose in beauty on the plains
Through which my childhood danced in glee,
When roses wreathed my idle chains,
And holy angels talked with me.

They rose sublime on mountain heights
Whereto my ardent youth aspired,—
Through silver days and golden nights,
Ere yet my heart grew dull and tired.

Their stately towers were all aflame
With rosy hues of morning light;
For hope, and love, and power, and fame
Burned on their peaks and made them bright.

Now brown and level fields expand
Around me, as I hold my way
Through barren hills on either hand,
And under skies of sober grey.

No radiant towers in distance rise,
  On soaring mountains strong and glad ;
No gorgeous banners flaunt the skies,—
  But all the scene is calm and sad.

Yet here and there, along the plain,
  A flower lights up the fading grass ;
And whispering wind and rustling rain
  Make gentle music as I pass.

And now and then a happy face,
  And now and then a cheerful thought
Give to the scene a pensive grace,
  The sweeter that it comes unsought.

And, looking past all earthly ill,
  I know there is an hour of rest,—
In a dark palace, lowly, still,
  And sacred to the weary guest.

THE NIGHT WATCH.

BENEATH the midnight moon of May,
  Through dusk on either hand,
One sheet of silver, spreads the bay,
  One crescent jet the land :

The black ships mirrored in the stream
  Their ghostly tresses shake—
When will the dead world cease to dream?
  When will the morning break?

Beneath a night no longer May,
  Where only cold stars shine,
One glimmering ocean, spreads away
  This haunted life of mine;
And, shattered on the frozen shore,
  My harp can never wake—
When will this night of death be o'er?
  When will the morning break?

THE HOMEWARD COURSE.

ON roseate shores, in evening's glow,
  With pulsing music soft and sweet,
While winds of summer gently blow,
  The waves of Time's great ocean beat;
No cloud obscures the heavenly dome,
  And only on the shining sea
The tossing crests of silver foam
  Presage the tempest yet to be.

Low down upon the ocean's verge,
  Blent with the waters and the skies,
Far, far across the sounding surge,
  The Golden City's towers arise:

Fair in the sunset light they gleam,
Youth's chosen realm, bold manhood's goal,
The promised land of fancy's dream,
The Golden City of the soul!

How softly bright, how purely cold,
Those domes and pinnacles of bliss!
How radiant, through its gates of gold,
That world of rapture smiles on this!
How glorious, in the dying day,
O'er bastion ridge and glimmering moat,
Through rainbow clouds and rosy spray,
Its purple banners flash and float!

There, safe from every mortal ill,
Waits every wasted love of man;
The hopes that Time could ne'er fulfil,
And only Death and Nature can!
There peace shall touch the eyes of grief,
And mercy soothe the heart of pain;
And every bud, and flower, and leaf
That withered here shall bloom again!

Ah, sailor to the golden realm,
With hope's glad haven just before,
Why muse beside the idle helm,
With listless glances back to shore?

Night hovers o'er his trackless way,
To blot the stars and dim the land;
What voice is at his heart, to stay
The signal wafture of his hand?

Not thus, in other days, his soul
Of power and trust could wander back—
But saw the mists of time unroll,
And angels throng his shining track;
Heard mystic voices, from afar,
Of warders on the sacred coast;
Sprang up to meet the morning star
And mingle with the heavenly host.

But he has borne the rage of storms,
Through many a slow and patient year,
Still following those celestial forms
That beckon and elude him here:
Till doubt has dimmed his eager gaze,
And toil subdued his ardent mind,
And sorrow burdened all his days
With quest of peace he shall not find.

Her kiss is cold upon his lips,
Who swore to be for ever true;
His eyes have seen youth's phantom ships
Fade down beyond the distant blue;

His hand has cleared the gathering moss
From many a tablet, cold and white,
Where, dark with sense of doom and loss,
His comrades sleep, in starless night.

The wayward shafts of cruel fate,
That strike the best and purest lives;
The curse of blessings come too late;
The broken faith that life survives;
Love's frail pretence, ambition's lure,
Malignant envy's poisoned dart,
That wounds and tortures, past all cure,
The mangled, seared, embittered heart;—

The weary, wistful, sad repose
Of ardour quenched and feeling sped;
The arid calm he only knows
Whose hope is—like his idols—dead;
All that repentant spirits bear,
For sin and folly past recall;
Remorse, endurance, patience, care—
His soul has known and borne them all.

Ah, touch him gently, winds of night,
And ocean odours, vague and strange,
Revive his morn of young delight—
Supreme o'er doubt, and fear, and change!

The fading tints of life restore,
  The wasted fires of youth relume—
And round his radiant path once more
  Let music sound and roses bloom!

Long has he gazed in Nature's eyes,
  Long kept the faith her glory yields,—
The pageant of the starry skies,
  The flowery pomp of spangled fields,
The fragrant depth of woodland ways,
  White in the moon, or dusk and dim,
And lonely mountain tops that blaze
  Through sunset lustre, vast and grim.

Long has he bowed at Nature's shrine—
  Shall Nature's soul desert him now?
Ah, shine again, thou star divine,
  And touch with light his darkening brow!
Though pleasures pall, though idols fall,
  Though wisdom end in long regret,
Death's glorious conquest pays for all,
  And He who made will not forget! . . .

The day is done, the storm is free,
  And night and danger ride the gale;
But, bravely speeding, far at sea,
  Gleams, white and clear, one lessening sail!

One moment seen, now lost to sight,
'Mid driving cloud and ocean's roar;
But, steered by God's own beacon-light,
He yet shall reach the golden shore.

THE SIGNAL LIGHT.

THE lonely sailor, when the night
O'er ocean's glimmering waste descends,
Sets at the peak his signal light,
And fondly dreams of absent friends.

Starless the sky above him broods,
Pathless the waves beneath him swell;
Through peril's spectral solitudes
That beacon flares—and all is well.

So, on the wandering sea of years,
When now the evening closes round,
I show the signal flame that cheers,
And scan the wide horizon's bound.

The night is dark, the winds are loud,
The black waves follow, fast and far;
Yet soon may flash, through mist and cloud,
The radiance of some answering star.

Haply across the shuddering deep,
One moment seen, a snowy sail
May dart with one impetuous leap,
And pass with one exultant hail!

And I shall dearly, sweetly know,
Though storm be fierce and ocean drear,
That somewhere still the roses blow,
And hearts are true, and friends are near.

Each separate on the eternal main,
We seek the same celestial shore:
Sometimes we part to meet again,
Sometimes we part to meet no more.

Ah, comrades, prize the gracious day
When sunshine bathes the tranquil tide,
And, careless as a child at play,
Our ships drift onward, side by side!

Too oft, with cold and barren will,
And stony pride of iron sway,
We bid the voice of love be still,
And thrust the cup of joy away.

No comfort haunts the yellow leaf!
Wait not till, broken, old, and sere,
The sad heart pines, in hopeless grief,
For one sweet voice it used to hear.

Thought has its throne, and Power its glow,
And Wealth its time of transient ease;
But best of hours that life can know
Are rose-crowned hours that fleet like these.

Let laughter leap from every lip!
To music turn the perfumed air!
Ye golden pennons, glance and dip!
Ye crimson banners, flash and flare!

On them no more the tempest glooms
Whose freed and royal spirits know
To frolic where the lilac blooms
And revel where the roses blow!

But, lights of heaven above them kiss,
As over silver seas they glide—
One heart, one hope, one fate, one bliss—
To peace and silence, side by side.

SAFE IN PORT.

WHILE pale with rage the wild surf springs
Athwart the harbour bar,
The safe ships fold their snowy wings,
Beneath the evening star:

In this calm haven rocked to sleep,
All night they swing and sway,
Till mantles o'er the morning deep
The golden blush of day.

Here, safe from every storm of fate,
From worldly strife and scorn,
Thus let me fold my hands and wait
The coming of the morn;
While all night long, o'er moon-lit turf,
The wind brings in from far
The moaning of the baffled surf
Athwart the harbour bar.

AFTER ALL.

THE apples are ripe in the orchard,
The work of the reaper is done,
And the golden woodlands redden
In the blood of the dying sun.

At the cottage door the grandsire
Sits, pale, in his easy-chair,
While a gentle wind of twilight
Plays with his silver hair.

A woman is kneeling beside him ;
  A fair young head is prest,
In the first wild passion of sorrow,
  Against his aged breast.

And far from over the distance
  The faltering echoes come,
Of the flying blast of trumpet
  And the rattling roll of drum.

Then the grandsire speaks, in a whisper,—
  " The end no man can see ;
But we give him to his country,
  And we give our prayers to Thee." . . .

The violets star the meadows,
  The rose-buds fringe the door,
And over the grassy orchard
  The pink-white blossoms pour.

But the grandsire's chair is empty,
  The cottage is dark and still,
There 's a nameless grave in the battle-field,
  And a new one under the hill.

And a pallid, tearless woman
  By the cold hearth sits, alone ;
And the old clock in the corner
  Ticks on with a steady drone.

GEORGE ARNOLD.

[Greenwood, November 13, 1865.]

BENEATH the still November sky,
With Nature's peace and beauty blest,
We put our selfish sorrow by,
And laid our comrade down to rest.

Rest—in the morning of his days!
Rest—when his heart had just begun
To feel the warmth of rip'ning praise,
The radiance of the rising sun!

Rest—to a strong and stately mind,
That rose all common flights above!
Rest—to a heart as true and kind
As ever glowed with human love!

And round him, dimly, through our grief,
In every natural sound we heard—
In whispering grass, and rustling leaf,
And sighing wind—the same sweet word:

Rest! And we did not break the spell
By holy nature woven round
The fading form we left to dwell
For ever in her hallowed ground.

No hymns were sung, no prayers were said,
Save what our loving hearts could say,
When, mutely gazing on the dead,
We blessed him ere we turned away:

Back to the round of daily care
That seems so vacant to us now,
Remembering what repose was there,
What peace, upon his marble brow.

And so we left him,—nevermore
To see, in sunshine or in rain,
The semblance of the form he wore
Whose loss has steeped our souls in pain.

But, long as skies of autumn smile,
And long as clouds of autumn weep,
Or autumn leaves their splendours pile
In sorrow o'er their poet's sleep;

And long as violets grace the spring,
Or June-born roses blush and blow,
Or pale stars shine, or south winds sing,
Or tides of summer ebb and flow;

So long shall live their poet's name,
When rest these broken hearts of ours,—
Embalmed in love, surpassing fame,
With stars and leaves and clouds and flowers!

ADA.

[Died March 4, 1874.]

SPRING will return and woods grow green
From shore to shore ;
But she, unseeing and unseen,
Returns no more.

Low in the ground her sleep is sweet,
And dark, and long :
No more she treads, with wandering feet,
Our maze of wrong.

No more the world's rebuke can fret
Her soul's repose ;
Nor kindness woo her to forget
Her bitter woes.

She will not stir, nor speak, nor heed,
Though eyes that weep,
And sorrow-stricken hearts that bleed,
Beseech her sleep.

Yet, be it mine, above her pall,
To shed one tear,
And speak one word of love, that all
The world may hear.

A brother's place in that fond breast
'Twas mine to hold :
Ah, they loved most who knew her best—
That heart of gold.

She was more kind than slumbers are
To eyes that grieve ;
And constant as the northern star,
That can't deceive.

There was no sorrow on this earth
But touched her heart ;
And in all gentle, childlike mirth
She bore her part.

There was no goodness but it won
Her reverent praise ;
And full of kind deeds, simply done,
Were all her days.

She strove, through trouble's lasting blight,
For pathways smooth ;
And many hands she found to smite,
And few to soothe.

A child, whom cruel want has made
A thing forlorn,
Stretching its little hands, for aid,
To eyes that scorn ;

And wandering through the winter night,
For beggar's dole,
Is not more piteous in its plight
Than was her soul.

Yet did she hope, and toil, and wait,
Heaven's will to know,
Till came the awful stroke of fate
That laid her low.

Sleep softly, softly, true and tried,
Where troubles cease;
And take at last, what man denied,
God's gift of peace.

ADELAIDE NEILSON.

[Died August 15, 1880.]

AND oh, to think the sun can shine,
The birds can sing, the flowers can bloom,
And she, whose soul was all divine,
Be darkly mouldering in the tomb:

That o'er her head the night-wind sighs,
And the sad cypress droops and moans;
That night has veiled her glorious eyes,
And silence hushed her heavenly tones:

That those sweet lips no more can smile,
  Nor pity's tender shadows chase,
With many a gentle, child-like wile,
  The rippling laughter o'er her face :

That dust is on the burnished gold
  That floated round her royal head ;
That her great heart is dead and cold—
  Her form of fire and beauty dead !

Roll on, grey earth and shining star,
  And coldly mock our dreams of bliss ;
There is no glory left to mar,
  Nor any grief so black as this !

LONGFELLOW.

[Died March 24th, 1882.]

ALONE, at night, he heard them sigh—
  These wild March winds that beat his tomb—
Alone, at night, from those that die,
  He sought one ray to light his gloom.

And still he heard the night-winds moan,
  And still the mystery closed him round,
And still the darkness, cold and lone,
  Sent forth no ray, returned no sound.

But Time at last the answer brings,
  And he, past all our suns and snows,
At rest with peasants and with kings,
  Like them the wondrous secret knows.

Alone, at night, we hear them sigh—
  These wild March winds that stir his pall;
And, helpless, wandering, lost, we cry
  To his dim ghost to tell us all.

He loved us while he lingered here;
  We loved him—never love more true!
He will not leave in doubt and fear
  The human grief that once he knew.

For never yet was born the day
  When, faint of heart and weak of limb,
One suffering creature turned away,
  Unhelped, unsoothed, uncheered by him!

But still through darkness, dense and bleak,
  The winds of March moan wildly round,
And still we feel that all we seek
  Ends in that sigh of vacant sound.

He cannot tell us—none can tell
  What waits behind the mystic veil!
Yet he who lived and died so well,
  In that, perchance, has told the tale.

Not to the wastes of Nature drift—
  Else were this world an evil dream—
The crown and soul of Nature's gift,
  By Avon or by Charles's stream!

His heart was pure, his purpose high,
  His thought serene, his patience vast;
He put all strifes of passion by,
  And lived to God, from first to last.

His song was like the pine-tree's sigh,
  At midnight o'er a poet's grave,
Or like the sea-bird's distant cry,
  Borne far across the twilight wave.

There is no flower of meek delight,
  There is no star of heavenly pride,
That shines not fairer and more bright
  Because he lived, loved, sang, and died.

Wild winds of March, his requiem sing !
  Weep o'er him, April's sorrowing skies !
Till come the tender buds of spring
  To deck the pillow where he lies :

Till violets pour their purple flood,
  That wandering myrtle shall not lack,
And, royal with the summer's blood,
  The roses that he loved come back :

Till all that Nature gives of light,
  To rift the gloom and point the way,
Shall sweetly pierce our mortal night,
  And symbol his immortal day !

"GOOD-NIGHT, MY BOY."

[W. A. S.—Died January 7, 1883.]

"GOOD-NIGHT, my boy ;" and with a smile
  He turned his steps and sped away :
Since then 't is but a little while,
  And he is dead to-day :

Dead—and the friend that once I knew,
  My comrade both in joy and pain,
So often tried and always true,
  Will never smile again.

His days were many, and the world
  Had most of all his thought and care;
But now his sails of toil were furled
  In Art's serener air.
The evening lamp, the storied page,
  The mantling glass, the song, the jest—
These turned the twilight of his age
  To morning and to rest.

The thorny paths of life he knew;
  His tender heart was quick to feel;
And wounds his pity wept to view,
  His bounty glowed to heal.
Of worldly ways, of frailty's slips,
  Of mortal sin, he had his share;
Yet still could breathe, with childhood's lips,
  His artless childhood's prayer.

Good deeds were all the work he wrought;
  Sweet thoughts and merry all he prized;
Nor power nor fame by him was sought,
  Nor humble things despised.

Strife could not live before his face,
  But wheresoe'er his footsteps fell
Came kindness, with its smile of grace,
  And everything was well.

He did not strive to win the heights :
  Enough for him the lowly vale,
The autumn sunset's pensive lights,
  The autumn's perfumed gale.
But toilers on the upward slope,
  Who greatly strove and bravely dared,
Had cheer of him, and felt new hope,
  Howe'er their fortune fared.

To brighten life, where'er he went,
  With laughter's sparkle, and to make
Home's fireside lovely with content,
  For gentle humour's sake—
This was his fate. Ah, darkly shows
  The path where yesterday he shone,—
That downward path of many woes
  That we must tread, alone.

Yet he, like us, had lost and grieved :
  He knew how hard it is to bear,
When, lone and listless and bereaved,
  We sink in dumb despair.

And could those lips, now marble chill,
  But speak once more from that true heart,
With what a jocund, blithe good-will
  They 'd bid our grief depart !

It was but yesterday he went :
  This is the room and that the door :
When some few idle days are spent
  'T will all be as before :
The heavenly morning will destroy
  This rueful dream of death and pain,
And I shall hear him say, "My boy,"
  And clasp his hand again.

THE MERRY MONARCH.

IT comes into my mind, in a genial mood,
  When the worlds of my being, without and within,
Are quietly happy, in all that is good,
  Unclouded by care and untempted by sin,—

If the gods would but grant me my dearest desire,
As I fancy, sometimes, they 're inclining to do,
That I shouldn't sit here, looking into the fire,
And dreaming, my love, as I 'm dreaming of you.

Nor should I be thinking, as sometimes I am,—
If the gods had but made me the thing I would be,—
That a station of rank, in a world full of sham,
Were a pleasant and suitable station for me.
Nor should I be striving, with heart and with brain,
For the laurel that poets are anxious to wear,—
That dubious guerdon for labour and pain,
That sorry exchange for the natural hair.

No! I never should care, if I had my own way,
For the storm or the sunshine, the Yes or the No ;
But, quietly careless and perfectly gay,
I could let the world go as it wanted to go.

I should ask neither riches, nor station, nor power;
They are chances, they happen, and there is an end;
But a heart that beats merrily every hour
Is a god's richest gift, is a man's truest friend.

And that 's what I 'd have! For that blessing I pray!
A spirit so gentle and easy and bright,
It would gladden with sunshine the sunniest day,
And with magical splendour illumine the night.
I could envy no potentate under the sun,
However sublime might that potentate be!
For I 'd live, the illustrious Monarch of Fun,
And the rest of the world should be happy with me.

I 'd be gold in the sunshine and silver in showers;
I 'd be rainbows, and clouds all of purple and pearl;
And the fairies of fun should laugh out of the flowers,
And the jolly old earth should be all in a whirl!

The brooks should trill music, the leaves dance in glee,
And old ocean should bellow with surly delight:
O, but wouldn't it be something festal to see,
If the gods did but grant me my kingdom to-night!

And I think it will come,—that succession of mine,
That crown with the opals of jollity set;
And the joy in my soul will be almost divine
When I finally teach myself how to forget;
Forget every sorrow in which I 've a part,
All the dreams that allure and the hopes that betray;
Contented to wait, with a right merry heart,
For silence and night and the end of the play.

OLD DAYS AND LOVES.

ROSY days of youth and fancy,
Happy hours of long ago!
Ah, the flickering sunbeam visions—
How they waver to and fro!

Galaxies of blue-eyed Marys,
With a Julia and a Jane,
And a troop of little Lauras,
Blush, and laugh, and romp again.

Moonlight meetings, dreamy rambles,
In the balm of summer night,
When our hearts were full of rapture
And our senses of delight,—

These remember—and remember
How the fond stars shone above,
Keeping in their mellow splendour
Watch and ward upon our love.

Youth is like the diamond dawning—
Bold it breaks to gorgeous day ;
Heavenly fires of power and beauty
Blaze and burn along its way.

Far within its mystic future
Oft are solemn voices heard !
Shaped to many a stately anthem
Floats the music of a word.

But that music, in the present,
Droops with passion's dull decay,
Till its echo in the spirit
Faints, and fails, and dies away.

Green be then the tender memory
Of the past, for ever sped,
So that youth may be immortal,
Though its days and dreams are dead !

THE BLUE AND THE BLACK.

HERE 's a health to the lass with the merry black eyes !
Here 's a health to the lad with the blue ones !
Here 's a bumper to love, as it sparkles and flies,
And here 's joy to the hearts that are true ones !
Yes, joy to the hearts that are tender and true,—
With a passion that nothing can smother !
To the eyes of the one, that are pensive and blue,
And the merry black eyes of the other !

Mind this now, my lad, with the sweet eyes of blue,
That, whatever the graces invite you,
There is nothing for you in this world that will do
But a pair of black eyes to delight you :
And mind, my gay lass, with the dear eyes of black,
In a pair of blue eyes to discover
That pure light of affection you never should lack,—
And you 'll always be true to your lover !

Long, long shall your eyes sparkle back with a kiss
To the eyes that live but to behold you :
Long, long shall the magic of mutual bliss
In a heaven of rapture enfold you !
And for ever to you shall that singer be wise,
Whose sweet thought is the truest of true ones,—
That the answering lustre of merry black eyes
Is the life of a pair of true blue ones.

AN EMPTY HEART.

[LINES TO A BEAUTIFUL LADY, SENT WITH A HEART-SHAPED JEWEL-BOX.]

WELL, since our lot must be to part
(These lots—how they do push and pull one!)
I send you here an empty heart,
But send it from a very full one.
My little hour of joy is done,
But every vain regret I smother,
With murm'ring, "When you see the one,
Think kindly sometimes of the other."

This heart must always do your will,
This heart your maid can fetch and carry,
This heart will faithful be, and still
Will not importune you to marry.
That other, craving hosts of things,
Would throb and flutter, every minute;
But this, except it hold your rings,
Will mutely wait with nothing in it.

Oh, happy heart! that finds its bliss
In pure affection consecrated!
But happier far the heart, like this,
That heeds not whether lone or mated;
That stands unmoved in beauty's eyes,
That knows not if you leave or take it,
That is not hurt though you despise,
And quite unconscious when you break it.

That other heart would burn and freeze,
And plague, and hamper, and perplex you,
But this will always stand at ease,
And never pet and never vex you.
Go, empty heart! and if she lift
Your little lid this prayer deliver:
"Ah, look with kindness on the gift,
And think with kindness on the giver."

JOHN BROUGHAM.

[Read at a Feast to John Brougham, at the Lotos Club, N.Y., June 4, 1874.]

IF buds by hopes of spring are blessed
That sleep beneath the snow,
And hearts by coming joys caressed,
Which yet they dimly know,—

On fields where England's daisies gleam,
And Ireland's shamrocks bloom,
To-day shall summer, in her dream,
Be glad with thoughts of Brougham.

To-day, o'er miles and miles of sea,
Beneath the jocund sun,
With merrier force and madder glee
The bannered winds shall run :
To-day great waves shall ramp and reel,
And clash their shields of foam,
With bliss to feel the coming keel
That bears the wanderer home !

For he that (loved and honoured here—
God bless his silver head !)
O'er many a heart, for many a year,
The dew of joy has shed,
Longs for the land that gave him birth,
Turns back to boy again,
And, bright with all the flags of mirth,
Sails homeward o'er the main.

Ah, well may winds and waves be gay,
And flowers and streams rejoice,
And that sweet region far away
Become one greeting voice ;

For he draws backward to that place,
  Who ne'er, by deed or art,
Made darkness in one human face,
  Or sorrow in one heart!

He comes, whom all the rosy sprites,
  Round humour's throne that throng,
Have tended close through golden nights
  Of laughter, wit, and song;
Whom love's bright angels still have known—
  He ne'er forgot to hear
The helpless widow's suppliant moan,
  Or dry the orphan's tear.

Where boughs of oak and willow toss,
  His life's white pathway flows—
With many an odour blown across,
  Of lily and of rose.
His gentle life that blessings crown
  Is fame no chance can dim;
We honour manhood's best renown
  When now we honour him.

Ambition's idols crowned to-day
  To-morrow are uncrowned;
Their fragments are of common clay,
  Strewn on the common ground;

But unto monarchs of the heart
Are crowns immortal given ;
And they who choose this better part
Cast in their lot with Heaven.

Grief may stand silent in the eye,
And silent on the lip,
When, poised between the sea and sky,
Dips down the fading ship ;
But there 's one charm his heart to keep
And hold his constant mind—
He 'll find no love beyond the deep
Like that he leaves behind !

So, to thy breast, old ocean, take
This brother of our soul !
Ye winds, be gentle for his sake !
Ye billows, smoothly roll !
And thou, sad Ireland, green and fair,
Across the waters wild
Stretch forth strong arms of loving care,
And guard thy favourite child !

And whether back to us he drift,
Or pass beyond our view,
Where life's celestial mountains lift
Their peaks above the blue—

God's will be done ! whose gracious will,
Through all our mortal fret,
The sacred blessing leaves us still,—
To love, and not forget.

HAND IN HAND.

[Read at a Feast to John Lawrence Toole, at the Lotos Club, N.Y., August 6, 1874.]

I.

THE odour that all sense delights
Enchants us most on summer nights,
And music, nature's kindest boon,
Breathes gentlest underneath the moon ;
For summer night and moonlight give
Quiet and grace, in which we live ;
In which alone the prisoned soul
Finds, if not words, at least control,
And, for a moment, lifts us far
Toward realms where saints and angels are.
So friendship's soft and tender voice
Sounds clearest when our hearts rejoice :
For, when contentment warms the heart,
Selfish and sordid cares depart,

Dulness exhales—and in their place
Burns the rich glow of peace and grace.
And then we see each other clear ;
The voice within the voice we hear ;
And deep thoughts surge to eye and cheek,
Nor words, nor smiles, nor tears can speak !
The old love-ditties that were sung,
The whispered vows, when we were young,
The silken touch of fragrant tress,
The maiden's awful loveliness,
Starlight and sea-breeze, beach and spray,
The sunshine of some sacred day,
A mother's kiss on lip and brow,
The tones of loved ones, silent now,
The light that nevermore will gleam,
The broken hope, the vanished dream—
All these come thronging through the brain,
Till, half with joy and half with pain,
Our souls break loose from common things,
And soar aloft on angel wings ;
Out of the tumult and the glare,
The fretful strife, the feverish care,
To that great life of peace and grace
Which waits the suffering human race ;
That larger life than sight or sound,
Wherewith God's goodness folds us round.—
This is the magic, this the power,
That thrills and crowns the festal hour !

II.

'T is summer, and the moon is bright,
And perfect gladness rules this night,
And through our rapture, gracious, free,
A silver voice, across the sea,
In tender accents whispers sweet—
"Be kind to him whom now you greet!
At England's fireside altar-stone
His fame is prized, his virtue known:
To England's heart his name is dear;
To him she gives her smile, her tear;
She loves him for his rosy mirth;
She loves him for his manly worth;
She knows him bright as morning dew;
She knows him faithful, tender, true;
Her hope comes with him o'er the deep,—
With him to smile, with him to weep.
Ah, give him friendship that endures,
And take him from her heart to yours."—
That voice is heard. By deed and cheer,
We give him loyal welcome here!
In art's fair garden, where we stand,
We take him by the strong right hand;
In friendship's cup the pledge we drain,
And bind him fast in friendship's chain.
Honour the man, whate'er his stage,
Who wields the arts to cheer the age!

III.

Ah, comrades, if I could but say
(To point and close this humble lay)
What other voices float to me,
Across another, darker sea,
What words of cheer are wafted through
My fancy's realm, to him and you,—
A music then indeed might flow,
Should make your hearts and pulses glow.
For then would ring out, rich and deep,
The royal tones of some who sleep,—
The brilliant and the wise, too soon
Snatched from our side ; in manhood's noon ;
Ere genius half her vigil kept ;
For whom our hearts and morning wept :
And these a welcome, without stint,—
My feeble words can only hint,—
Should give this friend and comrade, come
So far from kindred and from home.
But, this denied, I prattle on,—
The echo, when the music 's gone ;
With yet the hope that words well-meant
May find a grace for good intent,
With you, companions, tried and dear,
With him, the guest that 's honoured here.
Nor will I think he views with scorn
These rhymes of welcome, lowly born ;
These wild-wood roses, faint but sweet,—
In kindness scattered at his feet.

COMRADES.

[G. F. R.—August 29, 1875.]

I.

AT morning, when the march began,
And hope's strong eagle waved her wing,
Through banks of flowers the pathway ran,
Beneath the silver skies of spring.

We heard the mountain torrents call,
Far up among the peaks of snow;
Our happy laughter rang through all
The peaceful valleys spread below.

Our hearts were glad, our faces gay,
We trod the slopes with careless glee,
And through the hill-gaps, far away,
Hailed the blue splendours of the sea.

We knew no peril, felt no fear,
Nor thought how swift the moments pass:
The sighing pines we did not hear,
Nor our own footsteps on the grass.

But day wears on and night is near,
  Grey banners mingle with the gold,
Our ranks are thin, our faces drear,
  The sky is dark, the wind is cold ;

We hear the roaring of the waves
  Of that great sea to which we tend ;
Our thoughts are in the wayside graves,
  And on the solemn journey's end.

No more in vain the pine-trees sigh,
  Full well their mournful note is known ;
No footsteps pass unheeded by,
  No more unheeded fall our own.

No more we hear the joyous cries
  Reëchoed back from vale and hill ;
The light has faded from our eyes,
  The music of our youth is still.

II.

Bereft of many a hope of yore,
  Me fate and nature set apart
To hear and heed for evermore
  The dead leaves rustling in the heart.

Yet Heaven is kind that gives me grace,
Through good and ill, through toil and pain,
To hold in ever fond embrace
The cherished comrades that remain!

He, dear to all, whose gracious fame
Is goodness, bright beyond eclipse;
He, tried and true, whose honoured name
Is in your hearts as on your lips;—

He shall not, in this royal hour,
Lack words of mine, my faith to prove;
And, though they be not words of power,
They shall at least be words of love.

His the light-hearted, cheery mirth—
The snow-white bloom of blameless days—
Wisdom and grace and manly worth,
An honest mind and simple ways.

His the pure thought, the spirit sweet,
The wild-wood charm of graceful art,
The sadness and the joy that meet
In Nature's own benignant heart.

Him fortune never taught to fawn;
Want never sued to him in vain:
The word is spoken and is gone,
The actions of the just remain.

On wings of deeds the soul must mount!
When God shall call us, from afar,
Ourselves, and not our words, will count—
Not what we said, but what we are!

Ah, be it mine, or soon or late,
In that great day, in that bright land,
With him as now to take my fate,
Heart answering heart, hand clasped in hand!

EGDAR POE.

[Read at the Dedication of a Monument to Poe, at Baltimore, November 19, 1875.]

COLD is the pæan honour sings,
And chill is glory's icy breath,
And pale the garland memory brings
To grace the iron doors of death.

Fame's echoing thunders, long and loud,
The pomp of pride that decks the pall,
The plaudits of the vacant crowd—
One word of love is worth them all!

With dew of grief our eyes are dim :
  Ah, bid the tear of sorrow start ;
And honour, in ourselves and him,
  The great and tender human heart !

Through many a night of want and woe
  His frenzied spirit wandered wild,
Till kind disaster laid him low,
  And love reclaimed its wayward child.

Through many a year his fame has grown,—
  Like midnight, vast ; like starlight, sweet,—
Till now his genius fills a throne,
  And homage makes his realm complete.

One meed of justice, long delayed,
  One crowning grace his virtues crave !
Ah, take, thou great and injured shade,
  The love that sanctifies the grave.

And may thy spirit, hovering nigh,
  Pierce the dense cloud of darkness through,
And know, with fame that cannot die,
  Thou hast the world's compassion too !

THE VOICE OF THE SILENCE.

[Read before the Society of the Army of the Potomac, at the Academy of Music, Philadelphia, June 6, 1876.]

BRIGHT on the sparkling sward to-day
The youthful summer gleams ;
The roses in the south wind play ;
The slumberous woodland dreams :
In golden light, 'neath clouds of fleece,
'Mid bird-songs wild and free,
The blue Potomac flows, in peace,
Down to the peaceful sea.

No echo from the stormy past
Alarms the placid vale—
Nor cannon roar, nor trumpet blast,
Nor shattered soldier's wail.
There 's nothing left to mark the strife,
The triumph, or the pain,
Where Nature to her general life
Takes back our lives again.

Yet, in your vision, evermore,
Beneath affrighted skies,
With crash of sound, with reek of gore,
The martial pageants rise :

Audacious banners rend the air,
  Dark steeds of battle neigh,
And frantic through the sulphurous glare
  Raves on the crimson fray !

Not time nor chance nor change can drown
  Your memories proud and high,
Nor pluck your star of conquest down
  From glory's deathless sky !
For evermore your fame shall bide—
  Your valour tried and true ;
And that which makes your country's pride
  May well be pride to you !

For ever through the soldier's thought
  The soldier's life returns—
Or where the trampled fields are fought,
  Or where the camp-fire burns.
For him the pomp of morning brings
  A thrill none else can know :
For him night waves her sable wings
  O'er many a nameless woe.

How often, face to face with death,
  In stern suspense he stood,
While bird and insect held their breath
  Within the ambushed wood !

Again he sees the silent hills,
With danger's menace grim ;
And darkly all the shuddering rills
Run red with blood for him.

For him the cruel sun of noon
Glares on a bristling plain ;
For him the cold disdainful moon
Lights meadows rough with slain.
There 's death in every sight he sees,
In every sound he hears ;
And sunset hush and evening breeze
Are sad with prisoned tears.

Again worn out in fevered march,
He sinks beside the track ;
Again beneath night's lonely arch
His dreams of home come back ;
In morning wind the roses shake
Around his cottage-door,
And little feet of children make
Their music on the floor.

The tones that nevermore on earth
Can bid his pulses leap
Ring out again, in careless mirth,
Across the vales of sleep ;

And where, in horrent splendour, roll
The waves of victory's tide,
The chosen comrades of his soul
Are glorious at his side !

Forget ! the arm may lose its might,
The tirèd heart beat low,
The sun from heaven blot out his light,
The west wind cease to blow ;
But, while one spark of life is warm
Within this mould of clay,
His soul will revel in the storm
Of that tremendous day !

On mountain slope, in lonely glen,
By fate's divine command,
The blood of those devoted men
Has sanctified this land !
The funeral moss—but not in grief—
Waves o'er their hallowed rest ;
And not in grief the laurel leaf
Drops on the hero's breast !

Tears for the living, when God's gift—
(The friend of man to be)—
Wastes, like the shattered spars that drift
Upon the unknown sea !

Tears for the wreck who sinks at last,—
No deed of valour done;
But no tears for the soul that past
When honour's fight was won!

He takes the hand of Heavenly Fate,
Who lives and dies for truth!
For him the holy angels wait,
In realms of endless youth!
The grass upon his grave is green
With everlasting bloom;
And love and blessing make the sheen
Of glory round his tomb!

Mourn not for them, the loved and gone!
The cause they died to save
Plants an eternal corner-stone
Upon the martyr's grave:
And, safe from all the ills we pass,
Their sleep is sweet and low,
'Neath requiems of the murmuring grass
And dirges of the snow.

That sunset wafts its holiest kiss
Through evening's gathering shades,
That beauty breaks the heart with bliss
The hour before it fades,

That music seems to merge with heaven
  Just when its echo dies,
Is nature's sacred promise given
  Of life beyond the skies!

Mourn not! in life and death they teach
  This thought—this truth—sublime:
There 's no man free, except he reach
  Beyond the verge of time!
So, beckoning up the starry slope,
  They bid our souls to live;
And, flooding all the world with hope,
  Have taught us to forgive.

No soldier spurns a fallen foe!
  No hate of human-kind
Can darken down the generous glow
  That fires the patriot mind!
But love shall make the vanquished strong
  And justice lift their ban,
Where right no more can bend to wrong
  Nor man be slave to man.

So from their quiet graves they speak;
  So speaks that quiet scene—
Where now the violet blossoms meek,
  And all the fields are green.

There wood and stream and flower and bird
A pure content declare ;
And where the voice of war was heard
Is heard the voice of prayer.

Once more in perfect love, O Lord,
Our aliened hearts unite ;
And clasp, across the broken sword,
The hands that used to smite !
And since beside Potomac's wave
There's nothing left but peace,
Be filled at last the open grave,
And let the sorrow cease.

Sweet from the pitying northern pines
Their loving whisper flows ;
And sweetly, where the orange shines,
The palm-tree woos the rose :
Ah, let that tender music run
O'er all the years to be ;
And Thy great blessing make us one—
And make us one with Thee !

EDELWEISS.

[Read at a Lotos Club Feast to John Gilbert, commemorative of the Completion of his Fiftieth Year as an Actor, November 30, 1878.]

WHERE, pure and pale, the starlight streams
Far down the Alpine slope,
Still through eternal winter gleams
The stainless flower of hope!
Undimmed by cloud, undrenched by tears,
So may his laurel last,—
While shines o'er all his future years
The rainbow of the past!

Far, far from him the mournful hour
That brings the final Call,
And o'er his scenes of grace and power
Fate lets the Curtain fall!
And oh, when sounds that knell of worth,
To his pure soul be given
A painless Exit from the earth,
And Entrance into Heaven!

A PLEDGE TO THE DEAD.

[Read before the Society of the Army of the Potomac, at Albany, N.Y., June 18, 1879.]

FROM the lily of love that uncloses
In the glow of a festival kiss,
On the wind that is heavy with roses,
And shrill with the bugles of bliss,
Let it float o'er the mystical ocean
That breaks on the kingdom of night—
Our oath of eternal devotion
To the heroes who died for the right!

They loved, as we love—yet they parted
From all that man's spirit can prize;
Left woman and child broken-hearted,
Staring up to the pitiless skies;
Left the tumult of youth, the rich guerdon
Hope promised to conquer from fate;
Gave all for the agonised burden
Of death, for the Flag and the State.

Where they roam on the slopes of the mountain
That only by angels is trod,
Where they muse by the crystalline fountain
That springs in the garden of God,
Are they lost in unspeakable splendour?
Do they never look back and regret?—
Ah, the valiant are constant and tender,
And Honour can never forget!

Divine in their pitying sadness
They grieve for their comrades of earth;
They will hear us, and start into gladness,
And echo the notes of our mirth;
They will lift their white hands with a blessing
We shall know by the tear that it brings—
The rapture of friendship confessing,
With harps and the waving of wings.

In the grim and relentless upheaval
That blesses the world through a curse,
Still bringing the good out of evil—
The garland of peace on the hearse!—
They were shattered, consumed, and forsaken,
Like the shadows that fly from the dawn:
We may never know why they were taken,
But we always shall feel they are gone.

If the wind that sighs over our prairies
No longer is solemn with knells,
But lovely with flowers and fairies,
And sweet with the calm Sabbath bells;
If virtue, in cottage and palace,
Leads love to the bridal of pride,
'T is because out of war's bitter chalice
Our heroes drank deeply—and died.

Ah, grander in doom-stricken glory
Than the greatest that linger behind,
They shall live in perpetual story,
Who saved the last hope of mankind!
For their cause was the cause of the races
That languished in slavery's night;
And the death that was pale on their faces
Has filled the whole world with its light!

To the clouds and the mountains we breathe it;
To the freedom of planet and star;
Let the tempests of ocean enwreathe it;
Let the winds of the night bear it far,—
Our oath, that, till manhood shall perish,
And honour and virtue are sped,
We are true to the cause that they cherish,
And eternally true to the dead!

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES:

OR

THE CHIEFTAIN.

[READ AT THE "ATLANTIC" FESTIVAL IN COMMEMORATION OF THE SEVENTIETH BIRTHDAY OF OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES, AT BOSTON, DECEMBER 3, 1879.]

IF that glad song had ebbed away,
Which, rippling on through smiles and tears,
Has bathed with showers of diamond spray
The rosy fields of seventy years,—
If that sweet voice were hushed to-day,
What should we say?

At first we thought him but a jest,
A ray of laughter, quick to fade;
We did not dream how richly blest
In his pure life our lives were made:
Till soon the aureole shone, confest,
Upon his crest.

When violets fade the roses blow;
  When laughter dies the passions wake:
His royal song that slept below,
  Like Arthur's sword beneath the lake,
Long since has flashed its fiery glow
    O'er all we know.

That song has poured its sacred light
  On crimson flags in freedom's van,
And blessed their serried ranks, who fight
  Life's battle here for truth and man—
An oriflamme, to cheer the right,
    Through darkest night!

That song has flecked with rosy gold
  The sails that fade o'er fancy's sea;
Relumed the storied days of old;
  Presaged the glorious life to be;
And many a sorrowing heart consoled
    In grief untold.

When, shattered on the loftiest steep
  The statesman's glory ever found,
That heart, so like the boundless deep,
  Broke, in the deep no heart can bound,
How did his dirge of sorrow weep
    O'er WEBSTER'S sleep!

How sweetly did his spirit pour
The strains that make the tear-drops start,
When, on this bleak New England shore,
With Tara's harp and Erin's heart,
He thrilled us to the bosom's core
With thoughts of MOORE!

The shamrock, green on Liffey's side,
The lichen 'neath New England snows,
White daisies of the fields of Clyde,
Twined ardent round old Albion's rose,
Bloom in his verse, as blooms the bride,
With love and pride.

The silken tress, the mantling wine,
Red roses, summer's whispering leaves,
The lips that kiss, the hands that twine,
The heart that loves, the heart that grieves—
They all have found a deathless shrine
In his rich line!

Ah well, that voice can charm us yet,
And still that shining tide of song,
Beneath a sun not soon to set,
In golden music flows along.
With dew of joy our eyes are wet—
Not of regret.

For still, as comes the festal day,
In many a temple, far and near,
The words that all have longed to say,
The words that all are proud to hear,
Fall from his lips, with conquering sway,
Or grave or gay.

No moment this for passion's heat,
Nor mine the voice to give it scope,
When love and fame and beauty meet
To crown their Memory and their Hope!
I cast white lilies, cool and sweet,
Here at his feet.

True bard, true soul, true man, true friend!
Ah, gently on that reverend head
Ye snows of wintry age descend,
Ye shades of mortal night be shed!
Peace guide and guard him to the end,
And God defend!

A LOTOS FLOWER.

READ AT A FEAST TO CELEBRATE THE TENTH BIRTHDAY OF THE LOTOS CLUB, N. Y., MARCH 27, 1880.]

THOUGH still the heart of twilight grieves,
As evening's sun sinks low,
And sad winds stir the fallen leaves
With songs of Long Ago,
No shadow grim can ever dim
The glory of this hour,
When thus the blazing hearth we trim
Beneath the Lotos Flower.

Old Time may quench illusion's light,
And dreams of youth depart,
But neither time nor truth can blight
The sunshine of the heart—
That gentle light of pure content,
Our sober manhood's dower,
Sweet peace and calm affection, blent
Beneath the Lotos Flower.

In that dusk land of mystic dream
Where dark Osiris sprung,
It bloomed beside his sacred stream,
While yet the world was young;
And every secret Nature told,
Of golden wisdom's power,
Is nestled still in every fold
Within the Lotos Flower.

Here let our weary burdens fall,
And passion's longings cease:
The gods of life have given all,
When once they give us peace!
Black care shall vanish in a laugh,
Forgot be beauty's bower,
When thus the loving cup we quaff,
Beneath the Lotos Flower!

ELEGY.

[Spoken in Arlington Cemetery, Washington, D.C., on Decoration Day, May 31, 1880.]

I.

IF this were all, if lost with those that perished,—
O'er whom these winds of summer softly sigh,—
Our hopes were buried with the hearts we cherished,
And life were nothing but to toil and die;

What sadder scene than this that blooms before us,
With Nature's garlands decked, could earth display?
What mockery were this heaven that's bending o'er us,
Glad with the sunshine of the glittering May!

But here, where late with naked branches striving,—
Wet with the icy tears of wintry grief,—
Across this lonely field of sorrow driving
The angry tempest whirled the withered leaf;

Now swings the pendant bloom, now opening roses
Woo the soft zephyrs with their balmy breath;
Boughs wave, birds sing, and silver mist reposes,
In bliss, above these emerald waves of death.

And sure the Power, that out of desolation
Can thus the arid wastes of earth relume,
Ne'er meant the crown of all this vast creation
One hour of woe, and then the eternal tomb?

But, were this all—were hope with being ended,
In these dark cells that shrine our sacred dead;
Were all our prayers and tears in vain expended,
Our passion, labour, faith for ever sped;

Who would not yet—all selfish impulse spurning—
Live for mankind, and triumph with the just!
Who, from the field of honour backward turning,
Would trail a sullied ensign in the dust!

Though fate were cruel, human will undaunted,
Supreme o'er torture, regnant over time,
Can quell the bitterest foe that ever vaunted
This mortal frailty, which were Nature's crime!

It may be—every generous trust forbidden—
That, while these beauteous orbs of ruin roll,
From the dark sleep in which the dead are hidden
A flower can wake, but not the human soul:

Yet, sweet is every love and every longing;
Yet shines the dream of heaven in childhood's eyes;
And troops of angel phantoms still come thronging
To fancy's vision, in the twilight skies:

Yet stirs the heart with nameless, vague emotion,
When moonlight sleeps upon the summer sea;
Yet forest depths and lonely wastes of ocean
And mountain voices set the spirit free:

And, borne on wings of glorious endeavour,
Man yet can soar above his baser clay—
Throned in high deeds, for ever and for ever,
That cannot die, and will not pass away!

II.

High were their deeds, o'er whom our hearts are weeping!
Safe bides their fame, in all men's love and praise!
Hallowed the mould in which their dust is sleeping,
And sweet the memory that has crowned their days!

Ah, once for them young hope unveiled her splendour!
Ah, once for them time ran in golden sands!
They knew affection's accents, soft and tender,
They felt the touch of loving lips and hands.

They saw the awful face of sovereign Beauty;
White arms of proud Ambition lured them on;
But in their hearts breathed low the voice of duty—
They heard it, and they answered: they are gone.

The midnight wind was cold upon their faces,—
Pale in the silence of the crimson sod;
But who shall paint, through what resplendent spaces
Their souls sprang upward to the light of God!

No more, for them, in summer twilight's glimmer,
Shall distant music smite the chords of pain:
No more, as evening shades grow slowly dimmer,
Shall wandering fragrance pierce the tortured brain!

No more of lingering doubt, nor stern denial,
Nor baffled toil, nor slow, embittering strife!
But now, at once, the crown of earthly trial,—
The long, long summer of eternal life!

Calm-fronted, staunch, expectant, and unshaken,
Who dares the worst that any fate can bring—
For him, by iron purpose ne'er forsaken,
The grave no victory has, and death no sting!

We can but serve: some, by the instant giving
Of all that hand could do or heart could prize;
Some, by a meek, laborious, patient living,
A daily toil, an hourly sacrifice.

We falter on, now hoping, now despairing,
And hour by hour drag out life's little span:
They passed, in one tremendous deed of daring,—
They lived for honour, and they died for man!

Pile thick the amaranth and the myrtle o'er them—
For whom our laurelled banners flash and flow—
Roses that love, and pansies that deplore them,
And lilies, weeping from their hearts of snow.

Breathe low ye murmuring pines, ye whispering grasses!
Ye dews of summer night fall softly here!
Be sorrow's sigh in every breeze that passes,
And every rain-drop be a mourner's tear!

And O, ye stars, ye holy lights that cumber
The deep of heaven, pour benedictions down!
Shed your sweet incense on this sacred slumber—
Bright as our love, and pure as their renown!

Breathe our farewell! ah, very gently breathe it,—
Like ocean's murmur in the coral shell,
And tender as the sea-flowers that enwreathe it,—
For ever and for evermore, Farewell!

EDWIN BOOTH.

[Read at a Farewell Feast to Edwin Booth, at Delmonico's, N. Y., June 15, 1880.]

I.

HIS barque will fade, in mist and night,
Across the dim sea-line,
And coldly on our aching sight
The solemn stars will shine—

All, all in mournful silence, save
For ocean's distant roar—
Heard where the slow, regretful wave
Sobs on the lonely shore.

II.

But, O, while, winged with love and prayer,
Our thoughts pursue his track,
What glorious sights the midnight air
Will proudly waft us back!
What golden words will flutter down
From many a peak of fame,
What glittering shapes of old renown
That cluster round his name!

III.

O'er storied Denmark's haunted ground
Will darkly drift again,
Dream-like and vague, without a sound,
The spectre of the Dane;
And breaking hearts will be the wreath
For grief that knows no tear,
When shine on Cornwall's storm-swept heath
The blazing eyes of Lear.

IV.

Slow, 'mid the portents of the storm
And fate's avenging powers,
Will moody Richard's haggard form
Pace through the twilight hours;
And wildly hurtling o'er the sky
The red star of Macbeth,—
Torn from the central arch on high,—
Go down in dusky death!

V.

But—best of all!—will softly rise
His form of manly grace—
The noble brow, the honest eyes,
The sweetly patient face,
The loving heart, the stately mind
That, conquering every ill,
Through seas of trouble cast behind,
Was grandly steadfast still!

VI.

Though skies might gloom and tempest rave,
Though friends and hopes might fall,
His constant spirit, simply brave,
Would meet and suffer all—

Would calmly smile at fortune's frown,
  Supreme o'er gain or loss;
And he the worthiest wears the crown
  That gently bore the cross!

VII.

Be blithe and bright, thou jocund day
  That golden England knows!
Bloom sweetly round the wanderer's way,
  Thou royal English rose!
And English hearts [no need to tell
  How truth itself endures!]
This soul of manhood treasure well,
  Our love commits to yours!

VIII.

Farewell! nor mist, nor flying cloud,
  Nor night can ever dim
The wreath of honours, pure and proud,
  Our hearts have twined for him!
But bells of memory still shall chime,
  And violets star the sod,
Till our last broken wave of time
  Dies on the shores of God.

JOHN M'CULLOUGH.

[Read at a Feast at Delmonico's, N. Y., April 4, 1881.]

LONG hushed is the harp that his glory had spoken,
Long stilled is the heart that could summon its strain;
Now its chords are all silent, or tuneless, or broken,
What touch can awaken its music again!

Ah, the breeze in the green dells of Erin is blowing!
If not her great bard yet her spirit can flame,
When proud where the waters of Shannon are flowing
Her groves and her temples re-echo his name.

Float softly o'er shamrocks, and blue-bells, and roses,
Blend all their gay tints and their odours in one ;
And sweet as the zephyr in twilight that closes
Be the kiss of thy love on the brows of thy son !

Breathe tenderly o'er us, who cluster around him,
In this, his glad moment of triumph and pride :
Deep, deep in our souls are the ties that have bound him,
And life will be lone, with his presence denied.

From the arms of the mother, in childhood a rover,
To exile he came, on the wanderer's shore :
To the arms of the mother, his trials all over,
And honoured and laurelled, we yield him once more.

Speak low of affection that longs to embrace him,
Speak loud of the fame that awaits him afar—

When homage shall hail him, and beauty shall grace him,
And pomp hang her wreaths on the conqueror's car!

When the shadows of time at his touch fall asunder,
And heroes and demi-gods leap into light;
When the accents of Brutus ring wild in the thunder,
And the white locks of Lear toss like sea-foam in night;

When the grief of the Moor, like a tempest that dashes
On crags in mid-ocean, has died into rest;
When the heart of Virginius breaks, o'er the ashes
Of her who was sweetest, and purest, and best;

How proudly, how gladly their praise will caress him!
How brightly the jewels will blaze in his crown!
How the white hands of honour will greet him and bless him
With lilies and roses of perfect renown!

Ah, grand is the flight of the eagle of morning,
While the dark world beneath him drifts into the deep;
But cold as the snow-wreaths the mountains adorning
Is the light that illumines his desolate sweep.

When the trumpets are blown and the standards are streaming,
And the festal lamps beam on the royal array,
How oft will the heart of the monarch be dreaming
Of the home and the friends that are far, far away!

There's a pulse in his breast that would always regret us—
It dances in laughter, it trembles in tears;
With the world at his feet, he would never forget us,
And our hearts would be true, through an æon of years!

The cymbals may clash and the gay pennons glisten,
And the clangour of gladness ring jocund and free,

But, calm in the tumult, his spirit will listen
For our whisper of love, floating over the sea:

For the music of tones that were once so endearing
(Like a wind of the west o'er a prairie of flowers),
But that never again will resound in his hearing,
Except through the tremulous sadness of ours.

Ah, manly and tender, thy deeds are thy praises!
Speed on in thy grandeur, all peerless and lone,
And greet, in old England, her hawthorns and daisies,—
A spirit as gentle and bright as their own!

Speed on, wheresoever God's angel may guide thee!
No fancy can dream and no language can tell
What faith and what blessings walk ever beside thee,
Or the depth of our love as we bid thee Farewell.

LAWRENCE BARRETT.

[Read at a Feast at the Lotos Club, New York, June 7, 1881.]

WHEN from his gaze our shores receding
In night and distance drift away,
And, every present joy unheeding,
He turns to muse, and grieve, and pray,
How will regret and memory, meeting,
This brilliant scene bring back to view,
And hear once more your manly greeting,
And sigh once more his fond adieu!

And we, by sadness made more tender,
As here we knit our broken chain—
How gladly will affection render
Our gentle tribute once again!
How sweet 't will be, though joys are thwarted,
And smiles rebuked by sorrow's sigh,
To think, however friends are parted,
At least that friendship cannot die!

His eyes will look on English meadows
Where scarlet poppies smile and dream ;
And he will muse where wandering shadows
Drift over Avon's sacred stream ;
And, mind and soul in bondage taken,
Will roam those temples strange and vast
Where every pensive step will waken
The glorious memories of the Past.

But we shall hear, in grief beclouded,
Poor Harebell mourn his ruined home ;
And see, in night and tempest shrouded,
Grim Cassius pace the stones of Rome ;
With grizzled Yorick, frenzy-ridden,
From passion's fevered dream awake ;
And feel, with tears that flow unbidden,
The royal heart of Scotland break.

O, Art divine, supreme, undying—
Not Time nor Space can e'er subdue !
The seas roll on—the years are flying—
Man passes—Thou alone art true !
No cloud can dim their deathless lustre
Whose names thy angel hands enroll,
Nor blight the shining shapes that cluster
In thy vast pantheon of the soul !

Yet, many a cherished tie is broken,
Across that darkening waste of sea !—
They make no sign, they send no token,
They come not back to love and me.
I know where, deaf to blames and praises,
In youth and beauty cold and dead,
Rests now beneath old England's daisies
Her tenderest heart, her loveliest head !

And him we cast the roses after
Whose cynic smile was humour's kiss—
Whose magic turned the world to laughter—
Where dwells he, in an hour like this ? . . .
Ah, let us think, though gone before us,—
The vanished friends of days no more,—
They watch with fond affection o'er us,
And bless us, from their heavenly shore.

I see the radiant phantoms thronging,
To clasp him in their guardian thrall !
I bless him, by each noble longing
That e'er his gentle lips let fall !
By all high thought and pure devotion—
By towering pine and nestling rose !
Farewell, farewell ! on land or ocean—
God bless him, wheresoe'er he goes !

WILLIAM WARREN.

[At Boston, October 28, 1882, was commemorated, by appropriate performances, at the Museum, and in other ways, the Fiftieth Anniversary of Mr. Warren's adoption of the profession of the stage. At midnight, after the play, at a supper in the comedian's home, at No. 2 Bulfinch Place, a Loving Cup was presented to him,—being the gift of Edwin Booth, Joseph Jefferson, Mary Anderson, John M'Cullough, and Lawrence Barrett,—and, in offering that tribute, the author read this poem.]

RED globes of autumn strew the sod,
The bannered woods wear crimson shields,
The aster and the golden-rod
Deck all the fields.

No clarion blast, at morning blown,
Should greet the way-worn veteran here,
Nor roll of drum nor trumpet-tone
Assail his ear.

No jewelled ensigns now should smite,
With jarring flash, down emerald steeps,
Where sweetly in the sunset light
The valley sleeps.

No bolder ray should bathe this bower
Than when, above the glimmering stream,
The crescent moon, in twilight's hour,
First sheds her beam.

No ruder note should break the thrall,
That love and peace and honour weave,
Than some lone wild-bird's gentle call,
At summer eve.

But here should float the voice of song—
Like evening winds in autumn leaves,
Sweet with the balm they waft along
From golden sheaves.

The sacred Past should feel its spell,
And here should murmur, soft and low,
The voices that he loved so well,—
Long, long ago.

The vanished scenes should give to this
The cherished forms of other days,
And rosy lips that felt his kiss
Breathe out his praise.

The comrades of his young renown
Should proudly throng around him now,
When falls the spotless laurel crown
Upon his brow.

Not in their clamorous shouts who make
The noonday pomp of glory's lord
Does the true soul of manhood take
Its high reward.

But when from all the glimmering years
Beneath the moonlight of the past
The strong and tender spirit hears
"Well done," at last;

When love looks forth from heavenly eyes,
And heavenly voices make acclaim,
And all his deeds of kindness rise
To bless his name;

When all that has been sweetly blends
With all that is, and both revere
The life so lovely in its ends,
So pure, so dear;

Then leaps indeed the golden flame
Of blissful pride to rapture's brim—
The fire that sacramental fame
Has lit for him!

For him who, lord of joy and woe,
Through half a century's snow-white years
Has gently ruled, in humour's glow,
The fount of tears.

True, simple, earnest, patient, kind,
Through griefs that many a weaker will
Had stricken dead, his noble mind
Was constant still.

Sweet, tender, playful, thoughtful, droll,
His gentle genius still has made
Mirth's perfect sunshine in the soul,
And Pity's shade.

With amaranths of eternal spring
Be all his life's calm evening drest,
While summer winds around him sing
The songs of rest!

And thou, O Memory, strange and dread,
That stand'st on heaven's ascending slope,
Lay softly on his reverend head
The wreath of hope!

So softly, when the port he wins,
Toward which life's happiest breezes blow,
That where earth ends and heaven begins
He shall not know.

HENRY IRVING.

AVE, ATQUE VALE!

I.—November 18, 1883.

IF we could win from Shakespeare's river
The music of its murmuring flow,
With all the wild-bird notes that quiver
Where Avon's scarlet meadows glow;
If we could twine with joy at meeting
Their prayers who lately grieved to part,
Ah, then indeed our song of greeting
Might find an echo in his heart!

But though we cannot, in our singing,
That music and those prayers entwine,
At least we 'll set our blue-bells ringing
And he shall hear our whispering pine;
And these shall breathe a welcome royal
In accents tender, sweet, and kind,
From lips as fond and hearts as loyal
As any that he left behind.

II.—April 29, 1884.

Far off beyond the shining sea,
  Where scarlet poppies glisten,
And daisies on the emerald lea
  Lift up their heads and listen,
Where Thames and Avon glance and glow,
  To-day the waters, straying,
Will murmur in their tranquil flow
  The words that we are saying.

Ah, not in parting hours alone
  Is fond affection spoken :
The love that weeps in sorrow's moan
  Still smiles in welcome's token.
Farewell, farewell our hearts will sigh,
  When void and dark his place is ;
But "Well for me" is England's cry,
  To him her love embraces !

Farewell thou child of many a prayer !
  While lonely we deplore thee,
All crystal be the seas that bear
  And skies that sparkle o'er thee.
Thy mother's heart, thy mother's lip
  Will soon once more caress thee—
We can but watch thy lessening ship
  And softly say, God bless thee !

But let the golden waves leap up
  While yet our hearts beat near him !
No bitter drop be in the cup
  With which our hope would cheer him !
Pour the red roses at his feet !
  Wave laurel boughs above him !
And if we part or if we meet
  Be glad and proud to love him !

His life has made this iron age
  More grand and fair in story ;
Illumed our Shakespeare's sacred page
  With new and deathless glory ;
Refreshed the love of noble fame
  In hearts all sadly faring,
And lit anew the dying flame
  Of genius and of daring.

Long may his radiant summer smile
  Where Albion's rose is dreaming,
And over Art's Hesperian isle
  His royal banner streaming ;
While every trumpet blast that rolls
  From Britain's lips to hail him
Is echoed in our kindred souls,
  Whose truth can never fail him.

On your white wings, ye angel years,
  Through roseate sunshine springing,
Waft fortune from all happier spheres,
  With garlands and with singing ;
Make strong that tender heart and true—
  That thought of Heaven to guide him—
And blessings pour, like diamond dew,
  On her that walks beside him !

And when is said the last Farewell,
  So solemn and so certain,
And Fate shall strike the prompter's bell,
  To drop the final curtain,
Be his, whom every muse hath blest
  That best of earthly closes—
To sink to rest on England's breast,
  And sleep beneath her roses.

III.—April 6, 1885.

Now fades across the glimmering deep, now
    darkly drifts away
The royal monarch of our hearts, the glory
    of our day ;
The pale stars shine, the night wind sighs,
    the sad sea makes its moan,
And we, bereft, are standing here, in silence
    and alone.

Gone every shape of power and dread his
magic touch could paint;
Gone haunted Aram's spectral face, and
England's martyred saint;
Gone Mathias, of the frenzied soul, and
Louis' sceptred guile,
The gentle head of poor Lesurques, and
Hamlet's holy smile.

No more in grey Messina's halls shall love
and revel twine;
No more on Portia's midnight bowers the
moon of summer shine;
No golden barge on Hampton's stream salute
the perfumed shore;
No ghost on Denmark's rampart cliff affright
our pulses more!

The Morning Star of Art, he rose across the
eastern sea
To wake the slumbering harp and set the
frozen fountain free;
Now, wrapt in glory's mist, he seeks his
orient skies again;
And tender thoughts in sorrowing hearts are
all that must remain. . . .

Slow fade, across a drearier sea, beneath a darker sky,
The dreams that cheer, the lights that lure, the baffled hopes that die :
Youth's trust, love's bliss, ambition's pride—the white wings all are flown,
And Memory walks the lonely shore, indifferent and alone.

Yet sometimes o'er that shadowy deep, by wandering breezes blown,
Float odours from Hesperian isles, with music's organ tone,
And something stirs within the breast, a secret, nameless thrill,
To say, though worn and sear and sad, our hearts are human still ;—

If not the torrid diamond wave that made young life sublime,
If not the tropic rose that bloomed in every track of time,
If not exultant passion's glow, when all the world was fair,
At least one flash of heaven, one breath of Art's immortal air.

Ah, God, make bright, for many a year, on
Beauty's heavenly shrine,
This hallowed fire that Thou hast lit, this
sacred soul of Thine!
While love's sweet light and sorrow's tear,—
life's sunshine dimmed with showers—
Shall keep for aye his memory green in these
true hearts of ours!

ANUBIS.

[Elegy read at the Dedication of the Actors' Monument in Evergreen Cemetery, Brooklyn, N.Y., June 6, 1887.]

I.

COULD we but feel that our lost ones are
near us—
We in our darkness and they in their
light—
Could we but feel that they see us and hear us,
Ah, what a splendour would stream through
the night!
How this great world, in its jubilant madness,
Hopeless no longer, nor vagrant, nor blind,
Grandly would blaze through the heaven of
gladness,
Spurning the cloud of its sorrow behind!

II.

Still soars the jest to the echoing rafter,
Still the gay throng sparkles over the scene,
Still the sweet air is a ripple of laughter,
Red gleams the rose and the myrtle is green;
Still the lights flash and the trumpet is sounding,
Pennons are fluttered and banners unfurled—
Where is the grace and the genius abounding
Once that redeemed and illumined the world?

III.

Where are the hearts that were tenderly plighted,
Long years ago, in the kingdom of flowers?
Where are the hands that were fondly united?
Where are the eyes that looked love into ours?
Yesterday was it, that vainly we hearkened,
Hearing no longer the one cherished tone?
Yesterday was it, the heavens were darkened,
Leaving us stricken, bewildered, and lone?

IV.

Little by little the roof-tree is crumbled,
Slow from the branches the leaves drop away,
Year after year we are broken and humbled,
Nearing the desolate end of the play.
Red in the West, where the cloud-rack is scattered,
Lowers, defeated, the fugitive sun;
Dreary and cold, like the life it has shattered,
Night covers all, and our journey is done.

V.

Is there no more, when this pageant is ended? . . .
Here, where they slumber, the violet blows;
Here with the bird-note divinely are blended
Soul of the lily and heart of the rose!
What though the rage of the tempest may cover,
White with its anger, the shuddering plain—
Soon will the kiss of its heavenly lover
Thrill it to verdure and beauty again.

VI.

Ah, when we burst from this fettered existence,
Born into freedom and loosed into space,
How shall we spurn, at what infinite distance,
All that has bound us in earthly disgrace!
Who shall conceive what the soul may inherit!
Who shall declare the unspeakable bliss
Regnant and safe, in that world, for the spirit
True to God's thought through the trials of this!

VII.

Dark for them, now, whom we hallow and honour,
Dark and forlorn is the stage that was theirs;
Peace, with the garment of silence upon her,
Broods o'er the dust of their sorrows and cares.
Low lie their heads with the clods of the valley;
Never again will they come at our call;
Vainly around their cold ashes we rally;
Quenched are the lights, and the curtain must fall.

VIII.

Ends not this world in the night of denial!
Not for a grave were illumined the spheres!
Forward and far from this bondage and trial
Love reaps, in rapture, the harvest of tears.
Only for us is the pang of bereavement;
Theirs the same mission, yet more than the same—
Loftier powers, and nobler achievement
Wrought with the music of sweeter acclaim!

IX.

Labour and pain, that were never requited,
Passionate hope, that was never fulfilled,
Dreams and desires, that were baffled and blighted,
Pure aspirations, defeated and chilled,
Weary vicissitude, strife, and dejection,—
Fate gave them these, till it gave them release:
Here the great heart of a comrade affection
Gathers them home to the bosom of peace.

X.

Hallowed be ever this dream-haunted haven:
Hallowed the shaft that we consecrate here!
Never may ominous pinion of raven
Herald the spectre oblivion near!

Sentinel roses, bloom faithful and tender !
Guardian heavens, smile lovingly down,—
Clouds in your sorrow and stars in your splendour,—
Pouring the incense of deathless renown !

XI.

Echoes of blessing,—from where, in our vision,
Hearts never falter and eyes never weep,—
Blown on wild winds from the mountains elysian,
Drift, in sweet requiems, over their sleep !
Lift up our souls—till with pæans and dirges
Merciful Death shall at last set us free—
There, where the moan of the infinite surges
Dies on the shore of Eternity's sea !

SIR PERCEVAL.

[Read at a Feast to Lester Wallack, at the Lotos Club, New York, Dec. 17, 1887.]

I.

WITH a glimmer of plumes and a sparkle of lances,
With blare of the trumpet and neigh of the steed,

At morning they rode where the bright river
glances
And the sweet summer wind ripples over
the mead.
The green sod beneath them was ermined
with daisies,
Smiling up to green boughs tossing wild in
their glee,
While a thousand glad hearts sang their
honours and praises,
Where the Knights of the Mountain rode
down to the sea.

II.

One rode 'neath the banner whose face was
the fairest,
Made royal with deeds that his manhood
had done,
And the halo of blessing fell richest and rarest
On his armour that splintered the shafts
of the sun.—
So moves o'er the waters the cygnet sedately;
So waits the strong eagle to mount on the
wing;
Serene and puissant and simple and stately,
So shines among Princes the form of the
King! . . .

III.

With a gay bugle-note, when the daylight's last glimmer
Smites, crimson and gold, on the snow of his crest,
At evening he rides, through the shades growing dimmer,
While the banners of sunset stream red in the west.
His comrades of morning are scattered and parted—
The clouds hanging low and the winds making moan—
But, smiling and dauntless and calm and true-hearted,
All proudly he rides down the valley, alone.

IV.

Sweet gales of the woodland, embrace and caress him!
White wings of renown, be his comfort and light!
Pale dews of the star-beam, encompass and bless him
With the peace and the balm and the glory of night!

And, oh, while he wends to the verge of that ocean
Where the years, like a garland, shall fall from his brow,
May his glad heart exult in the tender devotion—
The love that encircles and hallows him now!

LOVE AND DEATH.

I.

ANGEL of Grief! thy spectral passage winging
Above black waves and under moonless skies,
Where nevermore is heard the voice of singing,
Nor any light e'er falls from Beauty's eyes,
Now wave thy sable pinion where he lies
Whom to destroy thy fancy did create!
In diamond pomp thy summons bade him rise,
And thine the blight that cursed his human state
And left him ocean-tost, forlorn, and desolate.

II.

Man lives not as he would, but as he must!
Deep in his soul the current of his doom
Runs darkly; that this clod of fevered dust,
Desiring heaven, and drifting to a tomb,
Wantons in revelry, or droops in gloom,
Exults in action, falters in defeat,
E'en as thy spirit doth its life illume,
Making its blood a torrent fierce and fleet,
Or as some stagnant pool where death and darkness meet.

III.

Thou didst create this being all of fire,
But 'twas not all from heaven; the grosser flame
Glowed with the finer,—till his mad desire
Revelled in wild delights, contemning shame
And staining the white crest of noble fame:
Yet all the while thy spirit fed his heart
With wildering dreams and hopes, till he became
A soul of thy dark strain, and dwelt apart,—
The visionary child of genius and of art.

IV.

From earliest youth his spirit kept its throne
By the sea's marge, or on the mountain height,

Or in the forest deeps, or meadow lone,
Where the long shadows fall, as comes the night,
And spectral shapes gleam on the startled sight
And vanish with low sighs: the darkling caves
That line the murm'rous shore were his delight,
Where the defeated billow chafes and raves,
And much he loved the stars that shine on lonely graves.

V.

By night he roamed along the haunted shore,
And on the vacant summit of the hills
Held converse with the vast; while evermore
The awful mystery with which Nature thrills,—
Whispering the poet's heart, and thence distils
The essence of her beauty,—wrapt his soul,
Buoyant and glorious, with such power as fills
The dread expanse where sky and ocean roll,
Thought measureless, supreme, and feeling past control.

VI.

Among the haunts of men a wanderer still,
He walked a dusky pathway, all his own ;
For men were not his mates—their good, their ill
Were things by him unfelt, to him unknown—
An empty laughter or an idle moan ;
And they that saw him passed him coldly by,
And thus he roved his shadowy world alone,—
A world of haunting shapes and phantasy,
And life a dream that longed yet dreaded more to die.

VII.

This is the bitter close—that in their flow,
The stern years ravage from us, one by one,
Each hope that sanctifies a life of woe,
All that is fair and bright beneath the sun,
And that sweet faith with which our days begun ;
Till not one glimmering ray from heavenly spheres,
O'er longings thwarted and high aims undone,
Gilds the bleak stream of those remorseless years,
And quenched the spring of joy, and dried the fount of tears.

VIII.

Close, close around us draws the prison shade
And ever closer, as our moments glide—
The iron web of doom ourselves have made,
By fealty to the power which doth reside
Within ourselves, not once to be denied,
Nor curbed, nor conquered! Action doth but make
A past to be remembered; and the pride
Of mightiest will that would life's guidance take
Must, like the frailest heart, at last repine and break.

IX.

This fate was his—but not in darkness all
Ran the wild current of his days and deeds;
Still on the ruined fane the moonlight falls,
And still the radiant dawn the night succeeds,
And his the gentlest heart that soonest bleeds,
And thus the first to love and to be blest
With that great glory of all human needs
Which, whether crowned or martyred, still is best—
The angel regnant once within the human breast.

X.

To love and to be loved—to have the bliss,
The perfect heaven of one responsive soul;
To feel the throbbing heart, the burning kiss,
When thought and feeling, loosed from all control,
Like torrents to the sea tumultuous roll,
And life becomes all rapture—this he knew!
And, knowing this, however Fate may dole
Her mercies forth, the many or the few,
No flower is left to bloom that e'er in Eden grew.

XI.

He loved—he lost—and from that fatal hour
His soul was haunted by one heavenly face;
One sacred name had evermore the power
To shed a glory upon every place
And gild each moment with a deathless grace!—
His heart had worshipped and his quest had found,
And now, though cold and empty his embrace,
His lonely footsteps fell on holy ground,
With angel shapes and tones for ever circling round.

XII.

The dying light of sunset; the low sigh
Of whispering winds that stir the fallen leaves;
The golden host of stars; the midnight sky;
The mystic sea, that not exults nor grieves;
The rosy magic of the dawn that weaves
Its web of beauty, fading while it grows,—
All that they mean the hallowed heart receives,
Sealed with the sacrament that grief bestows,
And all that Nature has of tender mystery knows.

XIII.

Angel of Sorrow! though thy fevered hand
Drop on the stricken heart a cross of fire;
Though gloom and sighs and tears, a grisly band,
Watch round his midnight couch till hope expire;
Though faith give o'er, and heavenly patience tire,
And naught remain but bitter, bleak despair,
Yet dost thou lift thy hapless victim higher!—
With nothing left to lose, he all may dare!
Who scorns the dart of death heeds not the frown of care!

XIV.

His o'er-fraught bosom and his haunted brain
Gave out their music and then ceased to be—
A strange, a weird, a melancholy strain,
Like the low moaning of the distant sea!
And when death harshly set his spirit free
From frenzied days and penury and blight,
At least 't was tender mercy's kind decree,—
Shrining his name in memory's living light,
With thoughts that gild the day and charm the lingering night.

XV.

He was the voice of beauty and of woe,
Passion and mystery and the dread unknown;
Pure as the mountains of perpetual snow,
Cold as the icy winds that round them moan,
Dark as the caves wherein earth's thunders groan,
Wild as the tempests of the upper sky,
Sweet as the faint, far-off, celestial tone
Of angel whispers, fluttering from on high,
And tender as love's tear when youth and beauty die.

XVI.

Oh, if he sinned he suffered! Let him rest,
Who, in this world, had little but its pain!
The life of patient virtue still is blest—
But there be bosoms powerless to restrain
The surging tempests of the heart and brain;
Souls that are driven madly o'er the deep,
Their passions fatal, and their struggle vain;
Men that in nameless grief their vigils keep,
With marble lips, and eyes that burn but cannot weep.

XVII.

Far from the blooming field and fragrant wood,
The shining songster of the summer sky,
O'er ocean's black and frightful solitude
Driven on broken wing, must sink and die;
So on the ocean of eternity,
Far from man's help and all things bright and warm,
Broken and lost, but with no lingering sigh—
For death, at last, is peace—his ravaged form
Sank in the weltering wave, and no more felt the storm.

XVIII.

His music dies not—nor can ever die—
Blown round the world by every wandering wind.
The comet, lessening in the midnight sky,
Still leaves its trail of glory far behind.
Death cannot quench the lustre of the mind,
Nor hush the seraph song that Beauty sings ;
Still in the Poet's soul must Nature find
Her voice for every secret that she brings,
To all that dwell beneath the brooding of her wings.

XIX.

The silent waves of Time's eternal sea
Roll o'er the silent relics of the dead ;
But, wafted on those waters, wide and free,
How bright, how fleet his starry songs are sped !
Black gleams the deep beneath, but overhead
All heaven is glorious with its orbs of light,
While, like a spirit loosed from ocean's bed,
Lo ! one clear echo, sounding through the night,
Floats up the crystal slopes of Life's far mountain-height.

INCENSE.

TRUE heart! upon the current of whose love,
My days, like roses in a summer brook,
Float by, in fragrance and in melody,
Take these—unworthy symbols of my soul,
Made precious by the heavenly faith of thine!
Take them: and, though a face of pain looks through
The marble veil of words, thy heart will know
That what was shadow once is sunshine now,
And life all peace, and beauty, and content,
Redeemed and hallowed by thy sacred grace.
Thrice happy he, who—favoured child of fate!—
Finds his Egeria in a mortal guise,
And, hearing all the discords of the world
Blend into music, round his haunted way,
Knows hope fulfilled and bliss already won!

THE END.

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